# Commentary

VOLUME ONE HUNDRED • NUMBER THREE • SEPTEMBER 1995

Fifty Years After

## Why America Dropped the Bomb
Donald Kagan

## The Lost Transport
Joseph A. Polak

## A More Perfect Union?
Wilfred M. McClay

## The Color of Jazz
Terry Teachout

## Egypt Against Israel
David Bar-Illan

## Philip Johnson's Brilliant Career
Hilton Kramer

## Academic Advocates
Gertrude Himmelfarb

**Books in Review:** Jon D. Levenson / Christopher Caldwell / Seth Cropsey / David Klinghoffer / Daniel J. Silver

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# Commentary®

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# Letters from Readers

## Affirmative Action

To The Editor of COMMENTARY:

Arch Puddington's article, "What To Do About Affirmative Action" [June], rightly says that any reform of affirmative-action programs must rule out racial preference altogether. The Supreme Court has since ratified this view as it applies to federal programs, holding that race-based set-asides in the construction business generally run contrary to the equal-protection clause of the Constitution, as well as to the original civil-rights goal of creating a color-blind society.

As former presidents of an institution that has played a central role in the civil-rights movement, and which, as do we, remains dedicated to the idea of the equality of all citizens, we cannot help wondering if the time has come for the American Jewish Committee (AJC), as well as other Jewish and non-Jewish community organizations, to reexamine, along the lines set out in Mr. Puddington's article, their position *in support* of racial preferences—a position the AJC has held since 1977.

In the eighteen years since the AJC embraced goals and timetables as central to affirmative action, we have witnessed the unintended consequences of these programs. Our colleague and fellow honorary president, Alfred H. Moses, summed it up well at the AJC's annual meeting last May:

> Racial preferences mandated by law have created voting districts, goals, and timetables that in practice have become quotas. The result is a spirit of disillusionment among black and white Americans alike. Rather than bringing us together on issues of common concern, we are separated. The failure to see where our nation is headed on this issue of race will, I fear, haunt us for generations.

Racial bitterness and self-segregation were not the ends envisioned by Frederick Douglass, Hubert Humphrey, or Martin Luther King, Jr., and the other leaders and visionaries of the civil-rights movement. Nor do their past words and deeds suggest that they would defend what affirmative action has today become. Douglass, for one, derided quotas, mocking the idea of a racial utopia in which "colored" people "should constitute one-eighth of the poets, statesmen, scholars, and philosophers of the country." And none other than Justice Benjamin Cardozo commented that "competition is useless if favor may reverse the verdict."

Hubert Humphrey, the floor manager of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, championed that historic law not as ensuring "some group's power . . . but an equal opportunity of persons." And as to the final version of the Act, Humphrey, as Mr. Puddington notes, promised to "start eating the pages one after another" if anyone could discover language "which provides that an employer will have to hire on the basis of percentage or quota."

Martin Luther King, Jr. asked that black Americans, as all Americans, be judged "by the content of their character, not the color of their skin."

Douglass, Humphrey, and King allied themselves with the American tradition of individual liberty, seeking to extend liberty to those to whom it was denied. And they would all likely agree that there is no reason in simple justice why a poor Appalachian white struggling with poverty should be denied an opportunity bestowed upon an upper-income black merely because of the accident of the latter's birth in a more pigmented group.

Despite failures, the U.S. has been the best example of a working amalgam of race, color, creed, and ethnicity. The guiding star has been the equal treatment of persons as individuals. But in the last twenty years the pledge of equality for the individual has been undermined through a subterfuge by which goals and timetables function as de-facto quotas and attempt to achieve group results.

After a costly detour away from the principles of individual equality and toward group rights, America now seems prepared to reassert the tradition upheld by these men. We see this trend in recent Supreme Court rulings, in the growing popularity of the California Civil Rights Initiative, and in the thinking of estimable writers like Arch Puddington and a galaxy of



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independent-minded black thinkers like Stephen L. Carter, Thomas Sowell, and Shelby Steele. We hope that we will see it, as well, among our friends in human-rights institutions. It is not too late to recapture the first principle of American government and society.

MORRIS B. ABRAM
HOWARD I. FRIEDMAN
Honorary Presidents
American Jewish Committee
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dismantling what has become an article of faith such as affirmative action will not occur without a fatal blow from either the executive or legislative branches similar to the jolt that the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* dealt to *de-jure* segregation. . . . Unless a frontal political assault is made with unvarnished and unapologetic arguments marshaled in support of its demise, as Arch Puddington does in his timely article, affirmative action will remain an accepted and divisive practice.

Tinkering with affirmative action to perfect it, as some suggest to ensure that only those truly in need benefit, is not a realistic solution, either. Mr. Puddington alludes to this in his discussion of the alternatives to race-based affirmative action, such as relying on social or economic factors. These criteria must be rejected as well. Basing preferences upon socioeconomic classifications is still an artificial means of dividing otherwise equal people. If two candidates are equally qualified for a position in either a school or job, it is wrong to punish one for the success of his forebears. Is it not the dream of all parents to provide a better life for their children? . . . We have not, I hope, reached a point where success is now a criterion for punishment. . . .

Equally in need of reform is the legal basis for determining unlawful discrimination. There must be an end to adjudicating disparate-impact claims based upon numbers alone. Claimants of unlawful discrimination will need to prove that there is an unlawful intent behind the numbers and not that the numbers are sufficient evidence of unlawful intent.

Mr. Puddington . . . merely alludes to this principle in his discussion of standardized testing and the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Griggs* v. *Duke Power, Inc.* Griggs warrants more than a passing comment because it establishes the proposition that an examination of numbers alone can legally establish that unlawful discrimination is afoot. Affirmative action is the logical result of such reasoning. If the absence of a group in a particular position or institution is evidence of unlawful discrimination, then the presence of such a group in the appropriate numbers is a valid defense. Hence it all becomes a numbers game or, more precisely, the apportioning of benefits on the basis of immutable characteristics.

The history of affirmative action is evidence of the American people's generosity; they viewed it as a means to rectify a wrong. They saw no injustice in taking affirmative steps to encourage the participation of people who were previously denied access to the American dream. But now they see that the experiment did not work as intended and is creating exactly the opposite result, namely, otherwise qualified and hard-working people striving to succeed are stopped . . . because they are not the right race or sex. Institutions and employers are preyed upon by government and private claimants because they do not have the right mix of the right classes of people. In an effort to defend themselves against being labeled racist or sexist or against unbearable costs of litigation and potential damages, institutions preemptively create elaborate affirmative-action bureaucracies to practice what they purport to abhor: discrimination on the basis of race and sex.

Notwithstanding its good intentions, the experiment has failed. The generosity that permitted affirmative action to flourish in the first place is now being replaced with principled opposition, such as Mr. Puddington's article.

ROBERT S. NAYBERG
Flushing, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is no one public issue more responsible for my own ideological move rightward than affirmative action, which Arch Puddington so ably analyzes in his article. . . . But permit me to add a more personal note to the discussion; my experience, I suspect, is one that is shared by a good many other Americans.

I had the good fortune to grow up in one of the least racist or race-conscious environments possible. We were diverse when diversity

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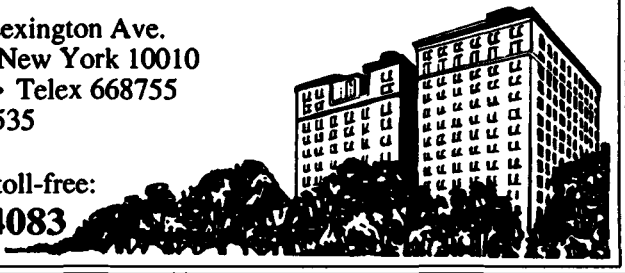


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wasn't cool. I lived in an integrated neighborhood in Englewood, New Jersey, from the time I was five years old (circa the mid-1960's), and attended integrated schools which were majority, though not overwhelmingly, black . . . from kindergarten through sixth grade. In this environment I saw smart whites and smart blacks, dumb whites and dumb blacks. It never would have occurred to me that blacks as a group needed special treatment or privileges or set-asides. Not only did my parents and others in authority tell me that race did not and should not matter in judging individuals, they operated on this principle as well.

These days, although I fight the impulse, I catch myself more and more often making judgments about people based solely on race. For example, whenever I encounter a black professional or manager, the thought that almost immediately comes to mind is that the person has obtained his position or success by way of quotas and set-asides, not individual merit or effort. . . .

Of course ours is still not a color-blind society, but the issue is whether affirmative-action programs have been moving us in that direction. It should by now be obvious that they have not, and that our government and other institutions should not tell us that it is wrong to make decisions about people based on race and then turn around and do exactly that. . . .

JOSEPH W. PUESCHNER
Houston, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Arch Puddington writes that an "unusual amount of political determination" will be required to end racial preference in hiring and promotion. I am pleased to inform readers of COMMENTARY that here in Canada's largest province, Ontario, we are witnessing such determination under a newly elected Conservative government.

Ontario has just gone through a tragic era of socialist governance which put in place, among other things, race- and gender-conscious hiring laws. In fact, government-mandated quotas were so intrusive that even private companies which had payrolls in excess of 50 employees were required to adhere to "numerical goals." . . . The consequence of such policies was the massive defeat of Ontario's socialist party, the New Democrats.

Now it is time for Premier-elect Mike Harris to follow through with his election commitment to fair hiring and the triumph of merit over any form of discrimination.

RICHARD SIMSON
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

ARCH PUDDINGTON writes:

Many thanks to Morris B. Abram and Howard I. Friedman for their generous words of support. I must say that I have always regarded Jewish organizational endorsement of racial-preference programs with some astonishment. After all, although there is no hard evidence on the effect of preferential policies on Jews, it would seem logical to assume that Jewish students seeking admission to elite universities and Jewish scholars denied college-teaching positions reserved for "diversity" appointments rank among the chief victims of these policies. Moreover, Jews have been the targets of a kind of intellectual intimidation exercised by supporters of affirmative action who claim that black anti-Semitism is a justifiable reaction to the opposition to preference expressed by some intellectuals who happen to be Jewish and, occasionally, by Jewish agencies. As a non-Jew, I say all this with some hesitation. But it does not seem out of place for me to note that Jews have never benefited from social policies which select winners and losers on the basis of race, nationality, or religion, and that in some instances such policies, and the emotions they generate, have had catastrophic consequences.

Robert S. Nayberg makes an important point in reminding us of the critical role played by the disparate-impact theory in promoting the spread of racial preference. It is, therefore, unfortunate that much of the discussion about "reforming" federal affirmative-action programs has concentrated on the various set-aside schemes that give minority- or female-owned businesses an advantage in securing federal contracts. Although more blatant in their promotion of racial and gender preferences than other preferential programs, set-asides have affected a relatively narrow segment of the population. By contrast, disparate-impact theory affects every major employer and thus a substantial proportion of the workforce. And by placing in jeopardy any employment criterion that leads to a racially "unbalanced" workforce, the notion of disparate impact has greatly contributed to the perception that the civil-rights agenda is the adversary of standards.

Mr. Nayberg is also right in asserting that a political response, rather than judicial action, will be required to resolve the affirmative-action controversy. To be sure, the most recent Supreme Court decisions have clearly made preferential policies more difficult for the federal government to justify. But these decisions have been cautiously drafted and narrowly applied, thus making it likely that we will see a further flood of litigation brought by alleged victims of both discrimination and reverse discrimination.

In addition, opponents of affirmative action who are tempted to let matters be resolved by the Courts should keep in mind that the unpopularity of racial preference derives in part from its having been *imposed* by the judicial system, the least democratic branch of government. A thoroughgoing public discussion of racial preference will not be pleasant, but clearly a decision made through the normal democratic process of debate and legislative action will be more acceptable, possibly even to affirmative-action supporters, than one handed down by unelected judges.

Joseph W. Pueschner's experience is significant. My impression, based both on personal experience and on anecdotal evidence, is that young white people today tend to be *less* supportive of affirmative action than their parents while at the same time enjoying friendlier, more natural relations with young people of other races and cultures. They are not bigots, nor are they responding to an environment of envy and greed. They are well aware of the ugly facts of American racial history, having spent many hours learning about them in school. But they regard the idea of handing out social benefits on the basis of race as monumentally unfair and unwarranted. While commentators have viewed the reactions of so-called "angry white males" as the driving force behind the anti-affirmative-action movement, it is this younger generation's hostility to preference, based not on anger but on common sense and notions of fair play, which may in the end prove crucial.

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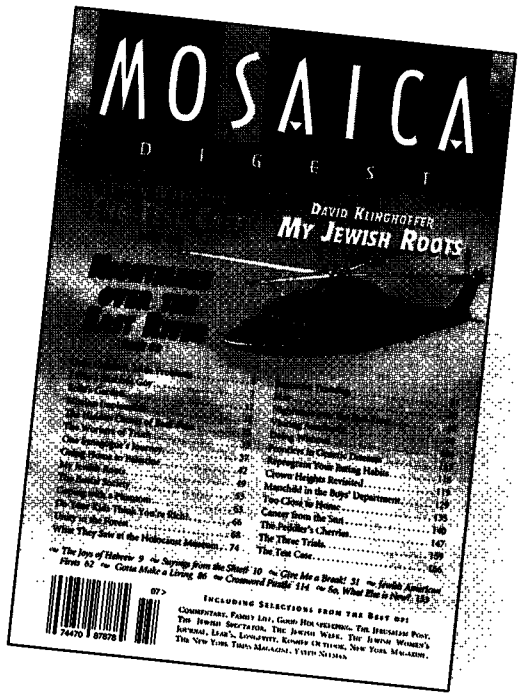


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## The Holocaust

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Alvin H. Rosenfeld's article, "The Americanization of the Holocaust" [June], with great interest and with my usual high expectations of fine scholarship. Yet I was disappointed. In the article, Mr. Rosenfeld deals with the controversies over the proper focus of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum that took place years ago, in the early 80's. He does not, however, discuss the Museum as an example of a form of Americanization that appropriately balances what is needed to transmit the experience of the Holocaust to the American people with a fundamental respect for the Event. With regard to the Museum, I think Mr. Rosenfeld has created a straw man. I could go on at length about this issue, but will limit myself to a few examples.

Contrary to what Mr. Rosenfeld maintains, in the Museum the Event is treated as unique, and is not placed in the context of American social problems or even in the context of the history of genocide. . . . In addition, the role of the United States is examined in detail, as are the origins of the Holocaust; in fact, more space is dedicated to origins than in any other museum of the Event.

Moreover, Mr. Rosenfeld does not consider the necessity and legitimacy of the process of Americanization—or Israelization—of the Event.

"By the waters of Babylon we sat and we wept as we remembered Zion," the psalmist wrote. The place where an event is recalled shapes the content of the act of remembrance. So, in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Auschwitz and Treblinka are recalled differently from the way they are remembered in Jerusalem, Berlin, or Warsaw. The act of recollection is different even if the Event that is portrayed is the same. And in the act of recollection, the past is projected onto the screen of the present. Visitors today view the Museum differently because of Bosnia and Rwanda. And we tell the story differently because the Museum is in Washington.

The history of the Holocaust goes against the grain of the American ethos. We are a nation of new beginnings, of eternal hope. We believe that tomorrow will be better than yesterday. . . . So, the most pressing demand for falsifying the Event came from those who wanted a happy ending. This pressure was resisted. Thus, in the Holocaust Memorial Museum the visitor learns of evil unredeemed, of death, of destruction. The Holocaust offers no happy ending, no transcendent meaning, no easy moralism. And even if we pause occasionally to learn of courage and valor, heroism and decency, the overriding focus is on the evil perpetrated by individuals, organizations, and governments. . . . The central theme of the story of the Holocaust is not regeneration and rebirth (as it is in Israel's Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem), goodness or resistance, liberation or justice, but death and destruction, dehumanization and devastation, above all, loss.

Millions were murdered, worlds were shattered, cities were without Jews and soon even without the memory of Jews. And behind each loss was a person whose life ended tragically and prematurely. And for those who survived, there were the burdens of memory. . . . In the Museum we meet these people in the identity cards visitors carry; in the hall adjacent to the Birkenau barracks where we hear survivors describe one day in the death camp; in the final film, *Testimony*, and in thousands of oral histories available at the touch of a button in the Learning Center.

For our visitors, the bulk of whom are Americans, confronting this European event brings a new recognition of the tenets of American constitutional democracy: a belief in equality and equal justice under law; a commitment to pluralism and toleration;. . . a struggle for human rights as a core national value and as a foundation for foreign policy. But that is what visitors bring to the Museum, not what the Museum gives them.

In many important respects the Museum represents the arrival of the American Jewish community as a confident, self-assertive group in America. A generation ago, the Museum would have been built in New York, not in Washington; at that time American Jews . . . would have preferred to keep their bereavement private, parochial. Or, if it had been built in Washington, it would, as Elie Wiesel feared, have muted the Jewishness of the victims of the Holocaust. . . . But now, in pluralistic America, the most painful Jewish memories can be brought to the center of our national life. The Museum includes all the Nazi victims without falsifying the Event, distorting, neglecting, minimizing, or deemphasizing the fact that Jews were the central target of Nazi genocidal deeds. . . .

Finally let me add that this critique is offered in a spirit of friendship and intellectual engagement to a scholar of distinction.

MICHAEL BERENBAUM
United States Holocaust
Memorial Museum
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Alvin H. Rosenfeld discusses the nature of our knowledge of the European disaster of the 1930's and '40's and derides a current disposition to distort and romanticize it. This involves inflating the role of rescuers; diverting attention—with stories such as that of Anne Frank—from the horrors of the Holocaust; confusing the Holocaust and its victims with other instances of violent injustice and hatred; and using the Holocaust as a metaphor for personal *angst* and as a means of self-discovery and/or self-torture. Undeniably, these tendencies interfere with facing the Holocaust for what it was: ultimate evil, deadly indifference, and the mass murder of European Jewry.

But Mr. Rosenfeld's summary hardly adds up to a fair or even adequate survey of how the Holocaust is represented and understood in the United States. Would that he had examined serious Holocaust studies at colleges and universities as well as exhibitions and programs at the numerous Holocaust museums throughout the country. Would that he had analyzed the reactions of people who, upon visiting the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum or seeing *Schindler's List*, confront for the first time the catastrophe that struck European Jewry. But no such balanced view is evident in his article. . . .

Attempts to honor those who saved Jews and identify altruism and sacrifice are not always infused with specious hopefulness. . . . Since its founding in 1963, the Thanks to Scandinavia Foundation, which memorializes and honors Scandinavians who protected Jews during the war, has never presumed to place redemptive acts "on an almost equal level with the deeds of Hitler," as Mr. Rosenfeld

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maintains. We have sought to identify and thank those in Scandinavia who refused to engage in barbarism or to remain indifferent to the fate of the Jews. They indeed deserve gratitude and remembrance. More importantly, we seek to understand why Denmark, as a nation, rejected anti-Semitism and resisted Hitler's attempt to destroy its Jewish community. We do not indulge in the denial of evil. We do, however, seek to examine and understand the ethos and ideals of a unique people who resisted evil and saved the Jews in their midst.

JUDITH S. GOLDSTEIN
Thanks to Scandinavia
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . As a historian of the Holocaust, I object to Alvin H. Rosenfeld's trashing the scholarly enterprise of research and writing about the rescue of Jews. . . . It goes without saying, of course, but obviously still needs to be said, that rescue must be studied, analyzed, and understood within the context of the Holocaust, as Nechama Tec, for example, has done brilliantly in her book about Christian rescue of Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland, *When Light Pierced the Darkness.* Her latest work, *Defiance,* about the Bielski camp, focuses on Jews who took on the dual role of partisan fighter and rescuer. In my own work, *Children With a Star,* a history of the life of Jewish children in Nazi-occupied Europe, I examine the rescue of Jewish children by both Jews and Gentiles. Mr. Rosenfeld is correct: rescue was rare, but it *was* undertaken, and to ignore it is, quite simply, dishonest scholarship.

I also object to Mr. Rosenfeld's treatment of the Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescue (JFCR), which he mentions only in his diatribe against Rabbi Harold N. Schulweis, thus making it appear, while not explicitly saying so, that he disapproves of its mission. . . . In fact, the JFCR does very important work, and deserves support. Irena Sendlerowa, who was recently honored at a JFCR fund-raising dinner, is a case in point. . . . Working with Jewish women in the Warsaw ghetto and Gentiles on the other side of the wall, she created a network to smuggle Jewish children to safety. Several hundred youngsters were saved through her efforts. Now elderly, impoverished, and infirm, Sendlerowa had neither the medicines she needed nor even a wheelchair to get out of bed until the JFCR provided her with this assistance. This is the sort of help the JFCR underwrites.

Essentially, JFCR's motto is: they helped us when we were in need, now they are old and many are sick; it is our turn.

DEBORAH DWORK
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am responding with some distress to Alvin H. Rosenfeld's article. . . . Since the Jewish community is so sensitive (almost paranoid) about its history, it is generally unwilling to countenance arguments attempting to generalize from that history, especially from non-Jews or from Jews who are not considered to have had the requisite "experience." Thus, while I normally believe that the validity of ideas is what should be persuasive in discourse and not the identity of the parties involved, I will lay my "Jewish credentials" on the table.

I am a twenty-six-year-old first-generation American. So while my fellow Jewish Generation-X'ers have perhaps had grandparents or great-grandparents who suffered under the Nazis, my own situation is one step closer: both my *parents* suffered under the Nazis. . . .

Now that I have buffered myself from accusations that I "just don't understand" or that I am "insensitive" to the unique suffering of the Jews, I will explain my distaste for the ideas expressed by Mr. Rosenfeld. . . . The competitive trend in current Jewish thinking about the Holocaust is evident whenever the Holocaust or the Nazis are used as a measure against which worldwide evil is judged. Mr. Rosenfeld and others resent it when the Holocaust is compared with other human atrocities. . . . The logic behind this attitude seems to be that such comparisons diminish the magnitude of the Holocaust; this is an example of a principle that equates uniqueness with importance. . . . Excuse me, but this logic just seems wrong. For here is another principle: that which is raised as a universal standard *increases* in importance and magnitude. . . .

Mr. Rosenfeld accuses writers and filmmakers who deal with the Holocaust of having an "American" tendency to look for happy endings. . . . The point of depicting the Holocaust, however, is not just to wallow in past miseries but also to educate us for the future. We should, therefore, emphasize, even disproportionally, the noble behavior of civilized and caring people because we want to show that it is possible to be good even when everyone else is evil. It is ironic that much Jewish condemnation of the world's behavior during the Holocaust is . . . that it stood by and did nothing; it seems disingenuous, then, when these same critics complain about the showcasing of those who did do something.

Finally, and most importantly, there is something very unseemly about competing over suffering. But this is exactly what this strain of Jewish thought does. How else can one explain the resentment and bitterness that are expressed every time an analogy with the Holocaust is made: "How dare you compare *x* with the unique evil of the Holocaust"? Is this how we Jews really want to behave, and is it even legitimate behavior? Can we compare suffering in such a normative fashion, saying that the treatment of the Jews was worse than Pol Pot's extermination of an entire generation of Cambodians, or the massacre of a million Armenians by the Turks, or the premeditated mass executions of Mao's cultural revolution? . . .

The competition is gross because suffering is an individual affair. People—not groups—feel pain, suffer, and die. And this is why we as Jews should not compete with other groups to be at the head of the suffering line. A single wrongful death should matter as much as the death of many. Those who have been at the mercy of evil should come together, not bicker and squabble over who had it worse. . . .

Our hearts should have room for the pain of others as well as for our own. For how can we expect them to empathize with our misery if we will not do the same for theirs? . . .

DANIEL KAUFMAN
CUNY Graduate Center
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Alvin H. Rosenfeld makes telling points about the sentimentalizing of a great historical horror into cheap metaphor. What he seems not to acknowledge, however, is

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that the celebration of rescuers does represent something vitally necessary in considering the Holocaust. It blocks a different sentimentality which, so to speak, leads downhill into helpless passivity. The existence of the rescuer confirms that the most absolute evil must and can be opposed, in the face of apparently impossible, even lethal, odds. The very absence of symmetry in those events—the vastness of the evil compared with the relatively tiny number of people in Europe who actively opposed it—makes it still more important that those few be decently acknowledged. The grim contrast highlights and stresses the evil and its nature in a way that an unrelievedly black (and so essentially destructive) tableau simply could not manage. . . .

With Mr. Rosenfeld's central point, however—the need for care and a certain sanity in this matter—I fully concur.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The Americanization of the Holocaust," Alvin H. Rosenfeld, our most astute American commentator on the Holocaust since the death of Lucy S. Dawidowicz, has marshaled indisputable evidence of how the American cult of equal-opportunity victimization, combined with incurable optimism about the goodness of human nature, has made Holocaust exploitation one of our few growth industries. He has also shown how these sanguine victimologists all share the view that truth is not to be valued for its own sake in scholarship or history.

Nevertheless, I have a quibble. Mr. Rosenfeld, invoking the Israeli scholar Yehuda Bauer, suggests that scanting the uniqueness of the Holocaust is a particularly American failing. He gives as an instance the egregious statement of a Holocaust Museum official that "we are not about what the Germans did to Jews but what people did to people." This sounds remarkably like the famous denunciation of old-fashioned Holocaust education in Israel by Shulamit Aloni (then-Israel's Minister of Education) because it taught children that "the Nazis did this to the Jews instead of the message that people did this to people." Aloni, of course, is an Israeli citizen, not an American one. But statements very similar to

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# Israel's Peace with the PLO

**Can the leopard change his spots...the wolf become a lamb?**

Two years ago, the world was electrified by "the handshake" and the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO. The Israelis promised the PLO control initially over Gaza and Jericho, with autonomy over all of the "West Bank" and "final status" discussions on Jerusalem to follow. With two years of experience behind us, one wonders where this is going to lead.

## What are the facts?

**The PLO and Yassir Arafat.** The aim is and has always been the notorious "phased plan": to eliminate Israel in two stages—first by creating a Palestinian state in any territory vacated by Israel and then using that state to foment an allied Arab assault against the truncated and critically vulnerable Jewish state.

Since the signing of the Oslo agreement two years ago, Arafat has not fulfilled the promises that he has made and the assurances that he has given. Terror has increased; more Israelis have been murdered and maimed by the palestinians than in any previous comparable period. Until the "handshake"Arafat was officially declared a terrorist by the United States government and was not allowed entry into our country. He is personally responsible for hundreds of assassinations and terrorist attacks. The fact that such a man could appear on the White House lawn, that he could shake hands with the President of the United States, and that he could be awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace is truly astonishing.

**A mortal danger to Israel.** Turning over control of the Gaza strip and any part of the "West Bank" to the Arabs puts Israel in mortal peril. The basic conflict is not between Israel and the "Palestinians", with whom some accommodation, some arrangement of autonomy, could certainly be reached. The basic conflict is with the Arab nations, most of which, with the sole exception of Egypt and Jordan, are still in a state of war with Israel. They are armed to the teeth, not just with "conventional" weapons, but with missiles that even today can reach any part of Israel, and with weapons of mass destruction—chemical, biological and nuclear.

With the "West Bank" in Arab hands, missiles won't be needed. Mortars and shoulder-held Stingers would suffice to threaten every commercial flight into and out of Israel, to impede the take-off of military airplanes and to threaten and rain destruction on the principal cities of Israel and its most important industrial, commercial and military installations. Sure, the world would insist that the new Palestinian state be demilitarized. But does anybody really believe that with Israel surrounded by mortal enemies, they would allow such a military vacuum to exist for any length of time—even in the unlikely case that the Palestinians would so desire? If it yielded the "West Bank", Israel would be only nine miles wide at its narrow waist—it would take no major military effort to slice it in half and to destroy it. No country should expose itself to such peril. But with the Judean hills in enemy hands, and without the elaborate warning system on those hills, Israel is totally indefensible and at the mercy of its enemies. That is the opinion of 100 U.S. generals and admirals who so reported to the President and to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"If it yielded the "West Bank", Israel would be only nine miles wide at its narrow waist—it would take no major military effort to slice it in half and to destroy it. No country should expose itself to such peril".

We all want peace and, surely, besieged Israel, which has been under constant attack since the day of its creation, wants peace more than anybody. And it is likely that such fervent wish for peace has led Israel into making fateful concessions to Yassir Arafat and the PLO. It will be almost impossible to reverse what has been done. The process of empowering the Palestinians will almost certainly result in a Palestinian state. Will it, as we are told, be "democratic" and peaceful? Not likely! Every one of the 22 Arab states is totalitarian, ruled autocratically, and ruthlessly abusive of human rights. Another Lebanon, carved on Israel's back, with never-ending strife and bloodshed is much more likely—a source of constant terrorist attacks against Israel and ultimately the source of a new Mid-East war. In such a war, Israel's ability to defend itself and to prevail would be in serious question.

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hers pour forth every week from Israeli educators who have taken her criticism to heart.

In Israel, moreover, at least as much as in America, the blurring of the Nazi crime against the Jews into an indistinct part of "man's inhumanity to man" is commonly the prelude to making Israelis into Nazis and Arabs into Jews. At least three professors of no particular distinction at Bauer's own Hebrew University—the late Yehoshua Leibowitz, Israel Shahak, and Moshe Zimmerman—have built international reputations entirely on their willingness to equate their own countrymen with the Nazis.

In April of this year the Israeli philosopher Emil Fackenheim created a stir by calling attention (quite properly) to the scandal of the U.S. Holocaust Museum inviting an American purveyor of the Israeli-Nazi equation, Marc Ellis, to lecture at the museum's research institute. But he might easily have turned his critical attention to similar moral desperadoes in Jerusalem itself.

EDWARD ALEXANDER
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Alvin H. Rosenfeld is right in deploring the recent trend of appropriating the Holocaust to a host of social and political injustices. "The rhetoric of 'oppression,'" he says,

> has become a commonplace of contemporary American political, academic, and artistic discourse, and its exponents frequently take recourse to the signs and symbols of the Nazi Holocaust to describe what they see as their own "victimization" within American society.

As Mr. Rosenfeld shows, examples of this abound in literature and the arts. . . . This tendency is also found in some academic writings. It is without doubt a dangerous trend, and it needs to be fought vigorously on all fronts. Deborah Lipstadt of Emory University and Steven Katz of Cornell have been doing just that for a long time, both in the academy and in the popular media. Lipstadt brought it up in a recent *New York Times* piece, and Katz launched it in print in *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Oxford, 1994). In this monumental study of genocide, Katz examines all forms of mass murder and argues most persuasively for the uniqueness of the Holocaust. His book delivers a crushing defeat to anyone attempting to universalize, relativize, or minimize the horror we call the Holocaust, *Shoah*, or *Khurbn*. . . .

MICHAEL TAUB
Judaic Studies/SUNY
Binghamton, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Alvin H. Rosenfeld is right on target. A survivor myself, I am constantly puzzled by the desperate attempts of writers and commentators to make this terrible and unique tragedy of the Jewish people just another example of man's inhumanity to man. Yes, there were other atrocities in the history of mankind, but never did an ostensibly civilized Western nation apply its skills systematically and scientifically to slaughter a people.

It is a distortion to place the Holocaust in the context of similar events. . . . For Jews, particularly the survivors, the Holocaust remains a symbol of our vulnerability and also our capacity to survive.

The universalization of the Holocaust and placing the blame on its victims are the twin arguments of the "politically correct" . . . and the new breed of historians who are trying to rewrite history. . . .

SAMUEL L. TENNENBAUM
West Orange, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Alvin H. Rosenfeld has wonderfully demonstrated how, despite all the current interest in the Holocaust, we still resist facing up to its true dimensions.

Holocaust survivors have noted the same refusal. In an interview for the Wiener Oral History Library, Sally Grubman, a survivor of Auschwitz and Ravensbruck, reflects:

> There is a tremendous interest in the Holocaust that we didn't see when we came, . . . but also some confusion about the reality. American Jewish teachers invite me into their classes to speak, but they do not want me to make the Holocaust a sad experience. They want to turn us into heroes and to create a heroic experience for all the survivors. There is this book they use, *The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance*, but the Holocaust was never a history of courage and resistance. It was a destruction by fire of innocent people, and it's not right to make it something it never was.

This reminds us, as does Mr. Rosenfeld's article, that increased discussion of the Holocaust does not necessarily bring increased understanding. . . .

HANK GREENSPAN
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am writing to let you know how moved I was by Alvin H. Rosenfeld's article. It touched me deeply as a philosophical approach to a fuller and relentlessly honest understanding of the Holocaust and on a more personal level. When I came to this country in 1963, having lived in Hungary during the war, I found that nobody wanted to talk about the pain-ridden past. Except for those close to me, no one could, or would, speak about those years. Even most Jews were embarrassed. Yet I found that the past lived in me more intensely than ever. I was haunted by those shadowy figures of my childhood, by the people who came from the camps after the war, alone, and by those who did not return: my classmates, all of them; my aunts and uncles, all of them; my cousins. And I could recall every single day of that horror-filled year of 1944: the German occupation and the miracles and coincidences through which my parents, my brother, and I stayed alive. . . .

I started to read everything I could on the subject . . . and in 1976 I taught my first class on the Holocaust. The most difficult aspect of this undertaking was, and has remained, the resistance students show to the distress the subject engenders. One of the books I have found most useful in this connection is Mr. Rosenfeld's *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature*. . . .

Mr. Rosenfeld holds up a mirror to a culture that has decided to ban the tragic and calls attention to its lightweight concept of evil as well as to its tendency to undo the past simply by tearing the Jewish catastrophe out of context and then cutting it to everyone's measure. Mr. Rosenfeld's plea for truth and reverence for the dead inspires us to protest against this view of the Holocaust and reminds us that without acknowledging its true evil, we cannot understand either the dimensions of the as-

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sault on Jewish life in Europe or even contemplate the questions that have arisen in its wake.

ZSUZSANNA OZSVATH
University of Texas
Dallas, Texas

ALVIN H. ROSENFELD writes:

Michael Berenbaum offers a spirited defense of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum but also an unnecessary one, for I admire much of what Mr. Berenbaum and his colleagues have accomplished and did not set out to subject their work to hostile criticism. Nevertheless, as his letter illustrates, the Museum, like all constructed monuments to history, brings its own problems with it. One of these is the unintended ossification of past events into some hypostatized thing that Mr. Berenbaum refers to as "the Event." To my ear, "the Event" sounds like a theological category rather than a historical referent, and it represents a kind of thinking that almost inevitably results in simplifying and distorting the past. To the degree that such thinking may inform the Holocaust Museum's sense of its mission, and thereby its exhibits and other presentations, it is to be regarded warily.

So, too, ought we to be wary of Mr. Berenbaum's assertion that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum "represents the arrival of the American Jewish community as a confident, self-assertive group in America." Woe to this country's Jews, and to any possible future that the American Jewish community may envision for itself, if this Museum, dedicated as it is to portraying the mass murder of most of European Jewry, is their way of asserting communal self-confidence. If it is this image of themselves—an image of degradation and slaughter—that Jews are most eager to project into "the center of our national life," they are in sad shape indeed.

A word about the portrayal of victims, the American fondness for "happy endings," and Mr. Berenbaum's telling insight about narrative point of view: I fully understand that "the place where an event is recalled shapes the content of that act of remembrance," but it is precisely my concern with this linkage that brought me to write as I did about the museum's situation in Washington, D.C. Consider the following words, taken from a widely circulated letter from the chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:

> Visitors will learn that while this is overwhelmingly a story about the extermination of the Jewish people, it is also about the Nazis' plans for the annihilation of the Gypsies and the handicapped, and about the persecution of priests and patriots, Polish intellectuals and Soviet prisoners of war, homosexuals and even innocent children.
>
> Then, finally, when breaking hearts can bear it no longer, visitors will emerge into the light—into a celebration of resistance, rebirth, and renewal for the survivors—whether they remained in Europe, or as so many did, went to Israel or America to rebuild their lives. And having witnessed the nightmare of evil, the great American monuments to democracy that surround each departing visitor will take on new meaning, as will the ideals for which they stand.

These words are meant to "sell" the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to the broadest conceivable segment of American society and to do so in precisely the terms that typically encourage Americans to "buy." The letter continues in more or less the same language and then concludes by urging us all to remember "the six million Jews and millions of other innocent victims who died in the Holocaust" and, at the same time, to "remember and to renew our own faith in life . . . in civilization . . . in humanity . . . and in each other."

Mr. Berenbaum claims that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has no interest in portraying a "happy ending," "transcendent meaning," or "easy moralism," and that its mission "goes against the grain of the American ethos," but if the letter from which I have been quoting does not represent precisely *all* of these treasured American ideals, then I do not know a "happy ending" when I see one. And while I am no less eager than any other American to embrace happiness when I can find it, I hold it objectionable to look for it in the precincts of the Nazi slaughterhouses.

Judith S. Goldstein seems to be in basic agreement with the major thrust of my article, which deals mainly with analyzing certain tendencies in American popular cul-

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ture that, as she correctly says, interfere with our ability to see the Holocaust "for what it was." At the same time, she faults me for not considering how the Holocaust is currently being taught in college courses, portrayed in museum exhibitions and programs, and, in general, "represented and understood in the United States." I agree that a comprehensive treatment would require a broader analysis, but in the space of a single article I could hardly be expected to examine how American culture at large treats the mass murder of European Jewry.

As for Thanks to Scandinavia, I mentioned it only in passing. The aims of this organization, as Miss Goldstein describes them, are certainly worthy, and I have no disagreement with honoring the wartime behavior of good people, in Scandinavia or anywhere else. As we have come to know more about the conduct of individuals and peoples during World War II, however, it has become clear that the Danish rescue of the Jews is a far more complex phenomenon than has been commonly thought and that the Danes behaved out of venal motives as well as altruistic ones. Because of the popular inclination to seek out "moral heroes" of the Holocaust, though, the history that has been passed on to us has to a great extent been mythologized, and, from King Christian X on down, tends to project an image of an exceptional nation acting uniformly and solely out of virtuous impulses. Such a notion does not accurately reflect the reality of the Danish experience. My article was written to expose such tendentious readings of history and to argue that, unless they are seen for what they are, namely, sentimentalizations of the truth of what actually occurred in Nazi-occupied Europe, we shall never be able to see the Holocaust "for what it was."

Judging from the vehemence of her objections, I would almost have to believe that Deborah Dwork had read an article other than mine, for nowhere do I say that we should "ignore" the rescue of Jews, nor have I engaged in "trashing" the scholarship that has been produced about such rescue. In fact, the focus of my article was not on the scholarly enterprise at all but on manifestations of Holocaust consciousness within certain sectors of American popular culture. Contrary to what she implies, I do not belittle the Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescue for honoring and helping people like Irena Sendlerowa, who, for all the reasons Miss Dwork states, should be honored and aided. Would that there had been many more like her in Poland during the war. But, as Aharon Appelfeld stresses in the passage from his writings that I quoted in my article, the Sendlerowas were few, "and those who betrayed Jews to the Nazis were many and evil." To point this out is not to engage in a "diatribe" but to speak the simple truth.

The truth gets so obscured in Daniel Kaufman's letter that I hardly know where to begin to reply. I argued for seeing rescuers and survivors as part of the narrative history of the Holocaust in proportion to their actual roles and numbers. Mr. Kaufman, who is "distressed" by this argument, advocates that we heighten the role of the rescuers and portray it "even disproportionally." Why "disproportionally"? So that we do "not just wallow in past miseries" but actively seek out the "good." From what follows in his letter, a little more wallowing on Mr. Kaufman's part would probably not hurt, for he shows absolutely no understanding of Jewish suffering under the Nazis as *communal* suffering but sees it instead as "an individual affair." For someone who takes pains to show off what he calls his "Jewish credentials," Mr. Kaufman displays a shocking ignorance of Jewish history, a deficiency that he raises to the level of ostentation.

Finally, a brief reply to Edward Alexander's "quibble," which I take to be less with points made in my article than with troubling developments within Israeli society. Sad to say, Mr. Alexander is more right than wrong in pointing out some outrageous misuses of the language of the Holocaust by prominent figures in Israeli academic and political life. In what I wrote for COMMENTARY, I confined myself to looking at aspects of the "Americanization" of the Holocaust, but a separate article could just as well be written about the "Israelization" of the Holocaust. And such an article, if fully honest, would expose the kinds of abuses Mr. Alexander identifies. The latest of these, which saw the Hebrew University historian Moshe Zimmerman equating the children of Jewish settlers on the West Bank with the "Hitler youth," follows a long series of scandalous exploitations of the Holocaust in Israeli political culture.

Finally, let me thank Herb Greer, Michael Taub, Samuel L. Tennenbaum, Hank Greenspan, and Szuzsanna Ozsvath for their thoughtful comments.

## The First Amendment

To the Editor of COMMENTARY:

The correspondence columns in the May issue featured an exchange on Robert H. Bork's article, "What To Do About the First Amendment" [February]. In replying to one of his critics, Samuel Rabinove, Judge Bork observes that Mr. Rabinove's version of the religion clauses of the First Amendment rests on a 1962 article that I published in COMMENTARY, while he relies on three books that support his views. My views on the subject are best reflected in my book, *The Establishment Clause: Religion and the First Amendment* (Macmillan, 1986; 2d edition, rev. and expanded, University of North Carolina Press, 1994), . . . which explicitly considers and rejects the three works relied on by Judge Bork. So does the excellent book by the Right Reverend Thomas J. Curry, *The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment*. Incidentally, Judge Bork is incorrect in claiming that most historians agree that Jefferson's Danbury letter did not express the views of those who adopted the Bill of Rights.

Judge Bork knows only the old understanding of an establishment of religion as the union of a government and a single or preferred church or religion. That inappropriately describes the American situation even in the colonial period. Of the fourteen states that comprised the United States when the First Amendment was ratified, seven authorized establishments of religion by law. Not one state maintained a single or preferred establishment of religion. Each had a general or multiple establishment of religion, benefiting all churches. An establishment of religion meant to those who framed and ratified the First Amendment what it meant in those seven states, and in all seven it meant public support of religion on a nonpreferential basis. The American establishments of religion, at the time of the ratification of the First Amendment, authorized the taxa-

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tion of everyone for the support of religion but allowed each person's tax to be remitted to the church of the person's choice. An establishment had come to mean not only a single religion that enjoyed legal preference, but mainly the recognition and financial support of religion generally, even in the absence of any preference. Such public support on a nonpreferential basis is what the establishment clause of the First Amendment sought to forbid.

Judge Bork alleges that Mr. Rabinove did not deal with the evidence of the original understanding of the establishment clause cited in his article, yet his article offered no evidence whatever except a reference to three unreliable books. My book focuses exclusively on the subject of the original understanding.

In his reply, Judge Bork does offer some evidence of the original understanding, but he takes a statement by James Madison out of context. Madison was answering anti-Federalist charges that the new government was empowered to establish a single religion. The fact that he said that Congress should not establish a religion did not mean that he thought Congress had power to aid all religions impartially. Madison believed that Congress had no authority to enact laws touching religion.

In his article, Judge Bork asserted that Jefferson and Madison held radical and unrepresentative views on the meaning of an establishment of religion. In fact, their views represented those of Virginia, which endorsed Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance by enacting Jefferson's Statute of Religious Liberty, banning even taxes for the support of the church of one's choice or for religion generally. The driving force in Virginia for separation of church and states came from evangelical Christians who believed that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, that religion is most effective when left alone by government, and that government aid to religion would injure it. Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists endorsed such views.

Indeed, the phrase, "the wall of separation," which Judge Bork dismisses as unrepresentative, was first used by Roger Williams over a century-and-a-half before Jefferson. Williams, who cared deeply about religion, wrote in 1644 that the "wall of separation" preserved the integrity of religion by walling out corrupting influences.

Judge Bork observes that the First Congress, which proposed the First Amendment, also reenacted the Northwest Ordinance, which directly benefited religion. Madison thought that such legislation was unconstitutional, and he was right: Congress has no power to enact laws on the subject of religion. Congressional power over territories does not justify legislation on that subject. The pedigree of the First Congress is not necessarily a convincing factor. The constitutionality of several acts of the First Congress was in doubt and fiercely contested. Not everything done by the Founding generation can be accepted as constitutional. The Sedition Act of 1798 was surely not constitutional, and unlike the Northwest Ordinance, it was enacted after the First Amendment had become part of the Constitution.

By contrast, the legislation that benefited Indians may have been constitutional, but it provides no precedent, Judge Bork to the contrary, because what the United States could do under the Constitution in regard to Indians it cannot constitutionally do by treaty or statute in regard to American citizens. Aid to Indians under either the treaty power or the power to regulate Indian affairs is not worth two cents as a precedent for anything else.

People who care about religion ought to be extremely wary of government assistance to it, even nonpreferentially. The same power that can assist religion can regulate it, harm it, and reduce it to ceremonial obedience to the state. Judge Bork thinks that the Founders did not understand the establishment clause to require government neutrality between religion and irreligion. He fails to tell us what clause of the Constitution warrants the legislation on behalf of religion that he favors. He also lacks understanding that religion is not just a matter of ritual or outward conformity; it is a matter of spirit and conviction. It cannot be government-sponsored. It is too personal and too sacred for government to nurture. Government has a harmful touch. It can conscript, regiment, and compel obedience but cannot and should not govern conscience any more than religion should dictate to the state. The Framers created a system in which neither religion nor govern-

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ment is sovereign over the other or subject to the other. Religion is none of the government's business. Those in favor of open competition in the marketplace should not be favoring government-sponsored prayers, or government orchestrations of religious services, or subsidies of religious beliefs. The establishment clause means free enterprise in religion, privately sponsored and privately supported.

LEONARD W. LEVY
Claremont Graduate School
Claremont, California

ROBERT H. BORK writes:

To support his claim that the establishment clause of the First Amendment prohibits government preference for religion over irreligion (assistance, for example, to all religions on a nondiscriminatory basis), Leonard W. Levy asserts that not one of the seven states that authorized establishments of religion maintained a single or preferred establishment of religion. Thus, in prohibiting "establishment," the ratifiers of the First Amendment must have intended to ban all government aid to religion.

There are factual problems with the premise from which that argument proceeds. Thomas J. Curry, whose book Mr. Levy endorses, states: "In fact, Americans both before and after the Revolution thought of establishment as an exclusive government preference for one religion." Mr. Curry goes on to note that Connecticut explicitly established Congregationalism and Massachusetts did so less candidly. Anglicans opposed these establishments. This kind of religious strife was what the establishment clause forbade the federal government from promoting.

And Mr. Curry offers another consideration:

> [A] country wherein eleven of thirteen states restricted officeholding to Christians or Protestants hardly envisaged Catholicism or Judaism, not to mention Mohammedanism or any non-Christian group, as part of the "religion" to be promoted and encouraged either in the states or the Northwest Territory.

The evidence supports the view that before and after the Revolution, Americans thought "establishment" meant discrimination among religions.

James Madison did indeed believe that Congress had no authority to enact laws touching religion, but he did not make it clear in the congressional debates that he thought the establishment clause accomplished so severe a limitation. It is plain from their subsequent actions, however, that the Congress that proposed the establishment clause did not agree with the position Madison and Jefferson took in Virginia. It will not do to say, as Mr. Levy does, that not everything done by the Founding generation can be accepted as constitutional. In my article and in my response to the letters, I listed a large number of actions taken by the First Congress and subsequent Congresses, filled with men conversant with the original understanding of the establishment clause. These actions demonstrate an understanding that the federal government could and should have a degree of involvement with religion, including offering aid. In this, they overrode the explicit opposition of Madison and Jefferson. If the repeated actions of the Founding generation do not count for evidence of what they understood, it is difficult to know where to look for their understanding.

Mr. Levy and I agree that people who care about religion ought to be wary of government involvement with it. That is a prudential admonition and does not affect the historical evidence of the meaning of the establishment clause. There is a distinction, however, between wariness as a policy matter and a constitutional bar. Government has always been involved with religion in such matters as conscientious objection, granting tax exemptions to church property, requiring standards for secular instruction in religious schools, and the like. What is to be resisted is government regulation of the free exercise of religion, which another clause of the First Amendment prohibits. It is to be doubted, in any event, that such assistance as bus rides, vouchers, free textbooks, etc. for religious schools on the same terms as public schools poses any threat to religious freedom. There is no problem about the constitutional warrant for such assistance. The states, having plenary powers, except where a misreading of the establishment clause blocks their efforts, have no need for a constitutional clause to warrant aid to religion. Federal aid would rest on the spending power provided in the Constitution.

Those who care about religion should examine proposed government involvements closely. But they should also be deeply concerned that the Supreme Court's deformation of the establishment clause is teaching Americans the pernicious fallacy that the First Amendment itself establishes a religion for the United States—and that religion is secular humanism.

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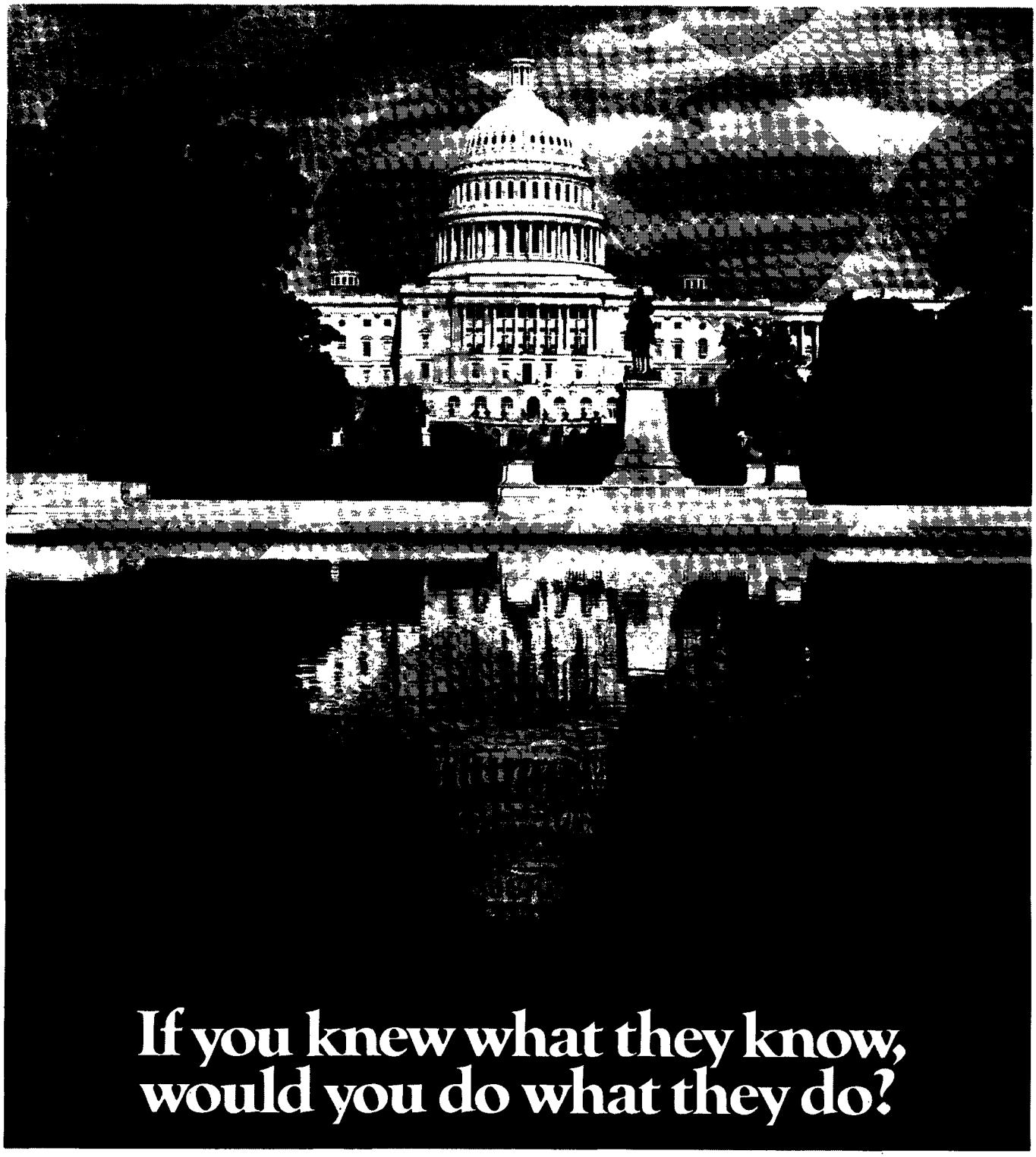

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# Why America Dropped the Bomb

*Donald Kagan*

THE 50th anniversary of the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has produced a wholly predictable debate over the necessity and morality of that decision. Or perhaps debate is the wrong word. All too typical of this year's commemorative activities was a proposed exhibit on Hiroshima at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington; the script for this exhibit presented a picture, in the words of an irate *Wall Street Journal* editorial, of a "besieged Japan yearning for peace" and lying "at the feet of an implacably violent enemy—the United States." Although the exhibit was subsequently canceled, it encapsulated a point of view that has now endured for a full half-century, and shows no sign of waning.

ON AUGUST 6, 1945 the American war plane *Enola Gay* dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, killing between 70,000 and 100,000 Japanese. Three days later another atomic device was exploded over Nagasaki. Within a few days Japan surrendered, and the terrible struggle that we call World War II was over.

At the time, the American people cheered the bombings without restraint, and for the simplest of reasons. As the literary historian Paul Fussell, then a combat soldier expecting to take part in the anticipated invasion of Japan, would later recall:

> We learned to our astonishment that we would not be obliged in a few months to rush up the beaches near Tokyo assault-firing while being machine-gunned, mortared, and shelled, and for all the practiced phlegm of our tough façades we broke down and cried with relief and joy. We were going to live.

At that moment, few if any Americans doubted that the purpose of this first use of atomic bombs was to bring the war to the swiftest possible end, and thereby to avert American casualties.

But the moment was short-lived. As early as 1946, challenges to the dominant opinion appeared and soon multiplied. To a large extent, the early revisionists—prominent among them such figures as Norman Cousins, P.M.S. Blackett, Carl Marzani, and the historians William Appleman Williams and D.F. Fleming—were influenced by the emerging cold war, whose origins, for the most part, they attributed to American policy under President Truman. As one exemplar of the new revisionist movement put it:

> The bomb was dropped primarily for its effect not on Japan but on the Soviet Union. One, to force a Japanese surrender before the USSR came into the Far Eastern war, and two, to show under war conditions the power of the bomb. Only in this way could a policy of intimidation [of the Soviet Union] be successful.

Another phrased the same purpose in different words:

> The United States dropped the bomb to end the war against Japan and thereby stop the Russians in Asia, and to give them sober pause in Eastern Europe.

In 1965, in *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam*, Gar Alperovitz picked up the main themes of the earlier writers, arguing for them now on the basis of new documentation and in a cultural climate—the climate of the mid-60's—newly hospitable to revisionist interpretations of American motives and behavior. According to Alperovitz, the bombs were not needed "to end the war and save lives—and . . . this was understood by American leaders at the time." Their aim, he wrote, was political, not military; their target was not Japan but the Soviet Union.

The chief villain was Harry Truman, who, in Alperovitz's reading, was bent on reversing Franklin D. Roosevelt's policy of peaceful accommodation with the Soviets. Thus, when he learned of the prospect of the bomb, Truman decided to delay the Allied meeting at Potsdam until the weapon could be tested. If it worked, he could take a tougher line in Eastern Europe and, perhaps, end the war before the Soviets were able to make gains in East Asia. In his eagerness to achieve these political goals, Truman failed to give proper attention to Japanese peace feelers; refused to change the demand for unconditional surrender, which was a barrier to Japanese ac-

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ceptance of peace terms; and did not wait to see if Soviet entry into the Asian war might by itself cause Japan to surrender. In short, the confidence provided by the American monopoly on atomic weapons allowed Truman to launch, at Japan's expense, a "diplomatic offensive" against the Soviet Union, one which would play a role of great importance in engendering the subsequent cold war.

Because of his more detailed arguments, resting in part on newly available documents; because protest over the Vietnam war was raising questions about the origins of the cold war; and because a new generation of American diplomatic historians, trained or influenced by early revisionists like William Appleman Williams, had come onto the academic scene, Alperovitz's book enjoyed great influence and established the direction which the debate over Hiroshima has taken up to this very day. Indeed, Alperovitz is in many ways the "dean" of atomic revisionism. A second edition of his book was published in 1985, and the latest version has just appeared under the title *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb**; a summary version was published as an article, "Hiroshima: Historians Reassess," in the Summer 1995 issue of the quarterly *Foreign Policy*.

ALPEROVITZ's eminence is all the more remarkable in that both his chief thesis and most of his arguments have, from their first appearance, been shredded by other scholars, his fellow revisionists among them. In, for example, *The Politics of War and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945* (1968), Gabriel Kolko, without mentioning Alperovitz or his book by name, directly refuted almost all his findings. Other revisionist critics found, in the words of a 1974 summary of their views, that

> the book strained the evidence, failed critically to assess sources, neglected the Roosevelt period, addressed the wrong questions, exaggerated the impact of the bomb, misunderstood Truman, and forced events into a dubious pattern.

This new generation of revisionists, notably Martin J. Sherwin and Barton J. Bernstein, stressed the essential continuity between the policies of Truman and those of Roosevelt, who had also insisted on secrecy and on keeping information about the atomic bomb away from the Soviets. Where Sherwin found no evidence of an elaborately planned showdown or "strategy of delay" in dealing with the Russians, Bernstein was even more emphatic. In his view, the hope of using the atomic bomb to produce and "cement" a peace that was to America's liking was only "a tasty bonus," and was in no way "essential to propel American leaders in 1945 to use the bomb on Japan."

These, the findings of two of the most scholarly revisionist historians, amounted to a rejection of a basic tenet of the tradition as represented by Alperovitz. And yet, even as they demolished his arguments, the new revisionists remained wedded to a number of his major conclusions. By the time these newer scholars appeared on the scene, condemnation of the bomb had become a central element in the larger revisionist project of proving the general error and evil of American policy, and for many it could not be abandoned, whatever the cost in faithfulness to the evidence. And so, even as they conceded that the bomb had not been used to advance the incipient cold-war political interests of the U.S., they shifted the central ground of argument to another question. Granting that the bomb had been used to bring the war to a swift end in order to avoid an invasion of Japan and the consequent loss of American lives, they proceeded to question whether it was either a necessary or a morally acceptable means to that end. Their answer was: no.

THAT, in a nutshell, is the answer that is still being given today, and where the argument has to be engaged. For the school that I have called "revisionist" now represents something more like a scholarly consensus, not to say a conventional wisdom universally parroted by educators, pundits, and the popular media. For distilled versions of this conventional wisdom, one need look no farther than the essays gathered in the "Special Report" which *Newsweek* devoted to the 50th anniversary of Hiroshima (July 24, 1995), or Murray Sayle's essay in the July 31 *New Yorker*, or the July 27 Peter Jennings special on ABC, *Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped*.

Let us begin with the first line of revisionist attack, which is to question whether an invasion of Japan would have been so costly in American lives as to justify the use of atomic bombs in order to avoid it.

In his memoirs, President Truman wrote that an invasion of the Japanese home islands would have entailed the loss of 500,000 American lives. In their own respective memoirs, Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Secretary of State James Byrnes proposed the figure of one million lives, or one million casualties overall.† The revisionists have pounced on both these estimates, producing lengthy arguments to show that they are impossible and leaving the impression that the numbers were cut from whole cloth to justify the bombings after the fact. All this is meant to undermine the probity of American leaders by showing them to be liars: if anticipated casualties at the time were fewer than the claims made after the war, the revisionists argue, then fear of such

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*Knopf, 688 pp., $32.50.

†See Robert James Maddox, *Weapons for Victory: The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Years After* (University of Missouri Press, 1995). I am grateful to Professor Maddox for allowing me to see the proofs of this work in advance of publication. My debt to it here is very considerable.

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casualties could not have been the motive for dropping the bomb.

But some anticipations of casualties at the time were in fact quite high. A study done in August 1944 for the Joint Chiefs of Staff projected that an invasion of Japan would "cost a half-million American lives and many more that number in wounded," while a memorandum from Herbert Hoover to President Truman in May 1945 estimated that a negotiated peace with Japan would "save 500,000 to one million lives." There is every reason to believe that such round, frightening numbers lingered in the minds of Truman and Stimson long after they were first received, and that they haunted all future deliberations.

More precise estimates were made nearer in time to the use of the bombs. In preparation for a meeting with President Truman scheduled for June 18, 1945, the army's Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, asked General Douglas MacArthur for a figure of American casualties in the projected invasion of Kyushu (code name: Olympic). Marshall was shocked by MacArthur's reply: 105,050 battle casualties (dead and wounded) in the first 90 days alone, and another 12,600 casualties among American noncombatants. Marshall called these figures unacceptably high.

In connection with that same meeting on June 18, the document that has received the most attention by revisionists is a study by the Joint War Plans Committee, prepared on June 15. It estimated that casualties in an invasion of southern Kyushu on November 1, followed some months later by an assault on the Tokyo plain, would be a relatively low 40,000 dead, 150,000 wounded, and 3,500 missing, for a total of 193,500 casualties in the entire two-pronged operation.

There are, however, several problems with these estimates. To begin with, they did not include naval casualties, although experience at Okinawa showed these were certain to be numerous. A separate estimate did exist for such losses—9,700 in the Kyushu invasion—but it excluded the unknowable number of casualties that would be suffered by American soldiers and sailors on transports struck by kamikaze attacks. Intercepted Japanese military messages revealed that the Japanese had about 10,000 planes, half of them kamikazes, to defend the home islands. In addition, the Japanese counted on flying bombs, human torpedoes, suicide-attack boats, midget suicide submarines, motorboat bombs, and navy swimmers to be used as human mines. All of these "had been used at Okinawa and the Philippines with lethal results," and the intercepts showed that they were now being placed on Kyushu.*

The report offering the figure of 40,000 dead, moreover, was peppered with disclaimers that casualties "are not subject to accurate estimate" and that the estimate was "admittedly only an educated guess." Indeed, when the report went from the original committee up to the Joint planners, it omitted the casualty figures altogether on the grounds that they were "not subject to accurate estimate." The document then went to Assistant Chief of Staff General John E. Hull. In his accompanying memorandum to General Marshall, Hull suggested that losses in the first 30 days in Kyushu would be on the order of those taken at Luzon, or about 1,000 casualties per day. Hull's memorandum, and not the committee report listing specific figures, was read out by Marshall at the June 18 conference with the President.

At the meeting itself, Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, suggested that Luzon was not as sound an analogy as Okinawa. There, American casualties had run to 75,000, or some 35 percent of the attacking force. "Marshall," writes the historian Edward Drea, "allowed that 766,700 assault troops would be employed against Kyushu. Although unstated, a 35-percent casualty rate translated to more than a quarter-million American casualties." As for the President, he was very mindful of the bloodbath at Okinawa, and he demanded the "Joint Chiefs' assurance that an invasion of Kyushu would neither repeat that savagery nor degenerate into race war." There is no evidence that Truman ever saw or heard the omitted low figures for the entire operation that had been drawn up by the Joint War Plans Committee.

But whatever the value of any of these estimates, they soon became obsolete. Marshall's calculation rested on the assumption that Kyushu would be defended by eight Japanese divisions, or fewer than 300,000 men, and that American domination of the sea and air would make reinforcement impossible. Intercepts of Japanese military communications soon made a mockery of those expectations. By July 21, the estimate of Japanese troops on Kyushu had grown to 455,000; by the end of the month, to 525,000. Colonel Charles A. Willoughby, MacArthur's intelligence officer, took note of the new situation: "This threatening development, if not checked, may grow to a point where we attack on a ratio of one (1) to one (1), which is not the recipe for victory." Soon the number of Japanese troops on Kyushu rose to 680,000 and, on July 31, a medical estimate projected American battle and nonbattle casualties needing treatment at 394,859. This figure, of course, excluded those killed at once, who would be beyond treatment.

Years later, in a letter, Truman described a meeting in the last week of July at which Marshall suggested the invasion would cost "at a minimum one-quarter-of-a-million casualties, and might cost as much as a million, on the American side alone, with an equal number of the enemy. The other

*See Edward J. Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War Against Japan 1942-1945* (University of Kansas Press, 1992).

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military and naval men present agreed." If Truman's recollection was accurate, this may have been the last such estimate before the dropping of the bomb; but whether accurate or not, there can be no doubt that Marshall's own concern did not abate even after Hiroshima. On the very next day he sent a message to MacArthur expressing alarm at the Japanese strength on southern Kyushu, and asking for alternative invasion sites. On August 11, five days after Hiroshima, three days after the Soviets had entered the war, and two days after Nagasaki, when the Japanese had still not surrendered, Marshall thought it would be necessary "to continue a prolonged struggle" and even raised the possibility of using atomic bombs as tactical weapons against massed enemy troops during the invasion.

As the foregoing suggests, it was, and remains, impossible to make convincing estimates of the casualties to be expected in case of an American invasion of the Japanese home islands. From the beginning the debate has been tendentious, distracting attention from more important questions. The large numbers offered by Stimson and Truman in their memoirs may not have been accurate, but the attacks on those numbers by the revisionists are at least as suspect. No one can be sure that the true figure would have been closer to the lower than to the higher estimates.

In any case, what matters is not what American leaders claimed after the war, but what they believed before the atomic bombs were used. On that point, there can be no doubt. In discussions that were not shaped by attempts to justify using the bomb, since it had not yet even been tested, men like Truman, Stimson, and Marshall were deeply worried over the scale of American casualties—whatever their precise number—that were certain to be incurred by an invasion. The President could not face another Okinawa, much less something greater. That is all we need to know to understand why he and his associates were prepared to use the bomb.

Yet this conclusion, supported both by the evidence and by common sense, has been furiously resisted by revisionists and their large cohorts of fellow-travelers. Thus, a 1990 account of the current state of the question reports: "The consensus among scholars is that the bomb was not needed to avoid an invasion of Japan and to end the war within a relatively short time . . . an invasion was a remote possibility." This would have been welcome news indeed to General Marshall, who as we have seen was deeply concerned about the difficulty and human cost of such an invasion right up to the moment of surrender.

A SECOND pillar of the argument that the dropping of the bomb was unnecessary goes as follows. The Japanese had already been defeated, and it was only a brief matter of time before continued conventional bombing and shortages caused by the naval blockade would have made them see reason. They were, in fact, already sending out peace feelers in the hope of ending the war. If the Americans had been more forthcoming, willing to abandon their demand for unconditional surrender and to promise that Japan could retain its emperor, peace could have come without either an invasion *or* the use of the bomb.

This particular case rests in large part on a quite rational evaluation of the condition of Japan and its dismal military prospects in the spring of 1945, and on the evidence that Japanese officials were indeed discussing the possibility of a negotiated peace, using the Soviets as intermediaries. But neither of these lines of argument proves the point; nor do both of them taken together.

Even the most diehard military leaders of Japan knew perfectly well how grim their objective situation was. But this did not deter them from continuing the war, as the most reputable study of the Japanese side of the story makes clear.* Although they did not expect a smashing and glorious triumph, they were confident of at least winning an operational victory "in the decisive battle for the homeland." Since *any* negotiated peace would be considered a surrender which would split the nation apart, Japan's militarists wanted to put it off as long as possible, and to enter negotiations only on the heels of a victory.

Some thought an American invasion could be repelled. Most hoped to inflict enough damage to make the invaders regroup. Others were even more determined; they "felt that it would be far better to die fighting in battle than to seek an ignominious survival by surrendering the nation and acknowledging defeat."

Premier Kantaro Suzuki supported the army's plan, and was content to prosecute the war with every means at his disposal—for that, after all, was "the way of the warrior and the path of the patriot." At a conference on June 8, 1945, in the presence of the emperor, the Japanese government formally affirmed its policy: "The nation would fight to the bitter end."

In spite of that, some Japanese officials did try to end the war by diplomatic negotiation before it was too late. Early efforts had been undertaken by minor military officials, who approached American OSS officers in Switzerland in April; but they were given no support from Tokyo. In July, some members of the Japanese government thought they could enlist the help of the Soviet Union in negotiating a peace that would not require a surrender or the occupation of the home islands. It is hard to understand why they thought the USSR would want to help a state it disliked and whose territory it coveted, especially when Japanese prospects were at their nadir; but such indeed was their hope.

The officials sent their proposals to Naotake

*Robert J.C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford University Press, 1954).

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Sato, the Japanese ambassador in Moscow. Their messages, and Sato's responses, were intercepted and must have influenced American plans considerably.

Sato warned his interlocutors in Tokyo that there was no chance of Soviet cooperation. An entry in the diary of Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal for July 15, 1945 reports "the gist of [Sato's] final message . . . Japan was thoroughly and completely defeated and . . . the only course open was quick and definite action recognizing such fact." Sato repeated this advice more than once, but the response from Tokyo was that the war must continue.

Revisionists and others have argued that the United States could have paved the way by dropping the demand for unconditional surrender, and especially that the U.S. should have indicated the emperor would be retained. But intercepts clearly revealed (according to Gerhard Weinberg in *A World at Arms*) that "the Japanese government would not accept the concept of unconditional surrender even if the institution of the imperial house were preserved." And then there were the intercepts of military messages, which led to the same conclusion—namely, as Edward J. Drea writes, that "the Japanese civil authorities might be considering peace, but Japan's military leaders, who American decision-makers believed had total control of the nation, were preparing for war to the knife."

The demand for unconditional surrender had in any case been asserted by Roosevelt and had become a national rallying cry. Truman could not lightly abandon it, nor is there reason to think that he wanted to. Both he and Roosevelt had clear memories of World War I and how its unsatisfactory conclusion had helped bring on World War II. In the former conflict, the Germans had not surrendered unconditionally; their land had not been occupied; they had not been made to accept the fact of their defeat in battle. Demagogues like Hitler had made use of this opportunity to claim that Germany had not lost but had been "stabbed in the back" by internal traitors like the socialists and the Jews, a technique that made it easier to rouse the Germans for a second great effort. In 1944, Roosevelt said that "practically all Germans deny the fact that they surrendered during the last war, but this time they are going to know it. And so are the Japs."

In the event, Truman did allow the Japanese to keep their emperor. Why did he not announce that intention in advance, to make surrender easier? Some members of the administration thought he should do so, but most feared that any advance concession would be taken as a sign of weakness, and encourage the Japanese bitter-enders in their hope that they could win a more favorable peace by holding out. And there were also those who were opposed to any policy that would leave the emperor in place. These, as it happens, were among the more liberal members of the administration, men like Dean Acheson and Archibald MacLeish. Their opposition was grounded in the belief that, as MacLeish put it, "the throne [was] an anachronistic, feudal institution, perfectly suited to the manipulation and use of anachronistic, feudal-minded groups within the country." It is also worth pointing out, as did the State Department's Soviet expert, Charles Bohlen, that a concession with regard to the emperor, as well as negotiations in response to the so-called peace feelers on any basis other than unconditional surrender, might well have been seen by the Soviets as a violation of commitments made at Yalta and as an effort to end the war before the Soviet Union could enter it.

WHAT if the U.S. had issued a public warning that it had the atomic bomb, and described its fearful qualities? Or warned the Japanese of the imminent entry of the Soviet Union into the fighting? Or, best of all, combined both warnings with a promise that Japan could keep its emperor? Again, there are no grounds for believing that any or all of these steps would have made a difference to the determined military clique that was making Japan's decisions.

Even after the atomic bomb had exploded at Hiroshima on August 6, the Japanese refused to yield. An American announcement clarified the nature of the weapon that had done the damage, and warned that Japan could expect more of the same if it did not surrender. Still, the military held to its policy of resistance and insisted on a delay until a response was received to the latest Japanese approach to the Soviet Union. The answer came on August 8, when the Soviets declared war and sent a large army against Japanese forces in Manchuria.

The foolishness of looking to the Soviets was now inescapably clear, but still Japan's leaders took no steps to end the fighting. The Minister of War, General Korechika Anami, went so far as to deny that Hiroshima had been struck by an atomic bomb. Others insisted that the U.S. had used its only bomb there, or that world opinion would prevent the Americans from using any others they might have. Then on August 9 the second atomic bomb fell on Nagasaki, again doing terrible damage.

The Nagasaki bomb convinced even Anami that "the Americans appear to have 100 atomic bombs . . . they could drop three per day. The next target might well be Tokyo." Even so, a meeting of the Imperial Council that night failed to achieve a consensus to accept defeat. Anami himself insisted that Japan continue to fight. If the Japanese people "went into the decisive battle in the homeland determined to display the full measure of patriotism . . . Japan would be able to avert the crisis facing her." The chief of the army general staff, Yoshijiro Umezu, expressed his confidence in the military's "ability to deal a smashing blow to the enemy," and added that in view of

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the sacrifices made by the many men who had gladly died for the emperor, "it would be inexcusable to surrender unconditionally." Admiral Soemu Toyoda, chief of the navy's general staff, argued that Japan could now use its full air power, heretofore held in reserve in the homeland. Like Anami, he did not guarantee victory, but asserted that "we do not believe that we will be possibly defeated."

These were the views of Japan's top military leaders *after* the explosion of two atomic bombs and the Soviet attack on Manchuria.

Premier Suzuki and the others who were by now favoring peace knew all this was madness. The Allies would never accept the military's conditions—restrictions on the extent of Japanese disarmament, on the occupation of Japan, and on trials of Japanese leaders for war crimes—and the continuation of warfare would be a disaster for the Japanese people. To break the deadlock he took the extraordinary step of asking the emperor to make the decision. (Normally no proposal was put to the emperor until it had achieved the unanimous approval of the Imperial Council.) At 2 A.M. on August 10, Emperor Hirohito responded to the premier's request by giving his sanction to the acceptance of the Allied terms. The Japanese reply included the proviso that the emperor be retained.

There was still disagreement within the American government on this subject. Public opinion was very hostile to the retention of the emperor, and in particular, as Gerhard Weinberg has written, "the articulate organizations of the American Left" resisted any concessions and "urged the dropping of additional atomic bombs instead." At last, the U.S. devised compromise language that accepted the imperial system by implication, while providing that the Japanese people could establish their own form of government.

Although the Japanese leaders found this acceptable, that was not the end of the matter. Opponents of peace tried to reverse the decision by a *coup d'état*. They might have succeeded had General Anami supported them, but he was unwilling to defy the emperor's orders. He solved his dilemma by committing suicide, and the plot failed. Had it succeeded, the war would have continued to a bloody end, with Japan under the brutal rule of a fanatical military clique. Some idea of the thinking of this faction is provided by an intercept of an August 15 message to Tokyo from the commander of Japan's army in China:

> Such a disgrace as the surrender of several million troops without fighting is not paralleled in the world's military history, and it is absolutely impossible to submit to the unconditional surrender of a million picked troops in perfectly healthy shape. . . .

It was the emperor, then, who was decisive in causing Japan to surrender. What caused him to act in so remarkable a way? He was moved by the bomb—and by the Soviet declaration of war. (That declaration, scheduled for August 15, was itself hastened by the use of the bomb, and moved up to August 8.) But statements by the emperor and premier show clearly that they viewed the Soviet invasion as only another wartime setback. It was the bomb that changed the situation entirely.

On hearing of this terrible new weapon, Emperor Hirohito said, "We must put an end to the war as speedily as possible so that this tragedy will not be repeated." Suzuki said, plainly, that Japan's "war aim had been lost by the enemy's use of the new-type bomb." Finally, the central role of the bomb was made graphically clear in the Imperial Rescript of August 14, in which the emperor explained to his people the reasons for the surrender. At its heart was the following statement:

> The enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is indeed incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives. Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but it would also lead to the total extinction of human civilization. Such being the case, how are We to save the millions of Our subjects. . . ? This is the reason why We have ordered the acceptance of the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the Powers.

There can be, in short, no doubt that the actual use of atomic weapons was critical in bringing a swift end to the war, and that mere warnings would not have sufficed.

FINALLY, whether or not they condemn American policy on instrumental grounds, some critics assail it on purely humanitarian ones. In particular they have asked whether it was necessary to drop the bomb on a *city*. Should it not have been used for the first time on a desert island, or some uninhabited place, as a demonstration?

This suggestion was put forward even before the bomb was dropped, but it failed to win support. A demonstration outside Japan, it was felt, would not be effective in persuading the Japanese themselves; and if it were announced for some location within Japan, the Japanese might place Allied prisoners on the site, and make extraordinary efforts to shoot down the carrying plane. Also, in August 1945 the Americans had but two bombs, and using one for a demonstration would leave only the other. There was the danger that one or both of the devices might fizzle, or that, even if the first one worked, those Japanese who wished to continue the war might deny, as in the event some did, that the blast came from a new weapon, or might argue, as others did, that the Americans had no more in their arsenal.

J. Robert Oppenheimer, who, as director of the research project at Los Alamos, was on the committee that selected the target cities, averred that

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to his mind no mere display would be sufficiently impressive to shock the Japanese into surrender. Even the Franck Report, signed by scientists urging a demonstration, doubted that this would break the will or ability of Japan to resist, and reluctantly approved use against Japan if all else failed. Leo Szilard, the scientist most vigorous in his opposition to the early use of the bomb, also conceded that "the war has to be brought to a successful conclusion and attacks by atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare." It is important to recognize that only in hindsight has moral revulsion been expressed against the use of atomic weapons on cities. As McGeorge Bundy points out in his book *Danger and Survival*, "*no one* put [the idea] forward before Hiroshima. . . . No one ever said simply, do not use it on a city *at all.*"

STILL, the moral question must be addressed. It has been argued that the nuclear bomb is a weapon like no other, so terrible that nothing can justify its use, and that its use in 1945 made its future use more likely. But events have not borne this out: in the 50 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear weapons have not been used in warfare, and it is not impossible that their first use helped deter a repetition.

Moreover, the sharp distinction between nuclear weapons and others on moral grounds seems questionable. In a single raid on Tokyo on March 9-10, 1945, incendiary bombs from American planes killed 80,000-100,000 Japanese (as many as at Hiroshima on August 6), wounded a similar number, and destroyed more than 250,000 buildings, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless. It is hard to see how the continuation of such bombing until there were no more targets would have been a moral improvement over Hiroshima. Distinguishing nuclear weapons from all others would seem, in fact, to give greater moral sanction to the use of weapons and tactics no less horrible.

If the moral complaint is to be fairly lodged, it must be lodged against any and all warfare that attacks innocents—which means, in effect, the overwhelming majority of wars to the present time. It is a historical axiom that the longer and more sharply contested a war, the greater the brutality with which it is fought. The British began World War II refusing to employ aerial bombardment; they dropped leaflets on Germany instead. Before the war was over, they had carried out the fire bombing of Dresden, killing tens of thousands of civilians. Similarly, American doctrine at the beginning of the war was that indiscriminate bombing of cities was both wrong and unwise. Before long, however, Hitler's bombing of Rotterdam and later of London, Japan's sneak attack on Pearl Harbor and its brutal treatment of prisoners of war, its bombing of Shanghai, the rape of Nanking, the forced prostitution of Korean women, and the Bataan death march made Americans change their minds. "Precision" bombings of targets in or near cities gave way to more indiscriminate destruction launched out of anger and with the purpose of destroying the enemy's morale, thereby (again) bringing the war to an earlier end.

In the history of warfare such developments are typical rather than unusual. It is right to do all we can to reduce the horrors of war. But to prevent them entirely, it will be necessary to prevent war.

LET us sum up. It is, I think, clear that any strategy other than the employment of atomic weapons would have failed to compel a Japanese surrender short of an invasion of the home islands. Even at a low estimate, the two planned invasions would have brought 193,500 American casualties and, as Robert J. Maddox puts it, "only an intellectual could assert that 193,500 anticipated casualties were too insignificant to have caused Truman to use atomic bombs." The Japanese, moreover, had plans to kill Allied prisoners of war as the fighting approached the camps where they were being held; so the swift surrender brought on by the bomb saved still more American lives.

And what about Japanese casualties? The experience of Luzon, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa showed that such casualties would have been many times greater than those suffered by Americans—invasion or no invasion. American planes would have dealt with many more Japanese cities as they had dealt with Tokyo, and would have repeated their attacks on the capital as well. The American navy would have continued its blockade, and starvation would have taken off countless civilians. In sum, the cost would have been greater than that exacted by the bombs. As a former president of the Japanese Medical Association has said, "When one considers the possibility that the Japanese military would have sacrificed the entire nation if it were not for the atomic bomb attack, then this bomb might be described as having saved Japan." It is a terrible thought, but the evidence suggests that he is right.

Gar Alperovitz, in the name of many other critics of U.S. policy, has assailed "America's continued unwillingness to confront the fundamental questions about Hiroshima" because "we Americans clearly do not like to see our nation as vulnerable to the same moral failings as others." Americans certainly share the same weaknesses as the rest of the human race. They need not, however, shrink from a confrontation of the "fundamental questions" surrounding Hiroshima. An honest examination of the evidence reveals that their leaders, in the tragic predicament common to all who have engaged in wars that reach the point where every choice is repugnant, chose the least bad course. Americans may look back on that decision with sadness, but without shame.

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# The Lost Transport

*Joseph A. Polak*

APRIL 1945: about a week before liberation, the command of Bergen-Belsen decided to transfer the entire section of the camp known as the *Sternlager* to Theresienstadt. The *Sternlager* prisoners were ostensibly of some political consequence and, the Nazis reasoned, might prove useful as exchange-barter for German nationals abroad. Three trains were used for this procedure, each headed toward Theresienstadt.

The story of the *Sternlager* transports is as follows. The first train left the Bergen-Belsen rail platform on April 6, 1945, with 400 inmates of the *Sternlager* and some 2,100 other prisoners. On April 13, at the town of Farsleben (near Magdeburg), it was liberated by the Americans. The second train, made up largely of Hungarian Jews, left for Theresienstadt on April 7, and actually reached its destination. On April 9, approximately 2,500 remaining members of the *Sternlager* boarded yet a third train, and this train, as far as anyone in the outside world knew, dropped off the face of the earth and became known to historians as the "Lost Transport."

Only later was it learned that the third train had traveled farther and farther east, searching furtively for rail corridors south to Prague and Theresienstadt that had not been bombed out or occupied by Allied forces. Even after Bergen-Belsen was liberated on April 15, the train remained firmly in Nazi hands—a microcosm of the Holocaust which had already ended, at least by some definitions, in most of Europe. While the British were setting up camp in Bergen-Belsen and attempting to feed and heal its wretched survivors, the train, with its conscientious SS command, hurtled doggedly eastward. With raging typhus, hunger, thirst, and the mounting death toll, the conditions on board were beyond description. The Allies added injury to insult by strafing the train, especially during its frequent stops.

On April 23, the train reached its final destination in a delicate forest deep in eastern Germany, outside the village of Troebitz, where it was liberated, in another ironic twist of history, by a Cossack division of Marshal Zhukov's army. By the time all the dead had been buried, fewer than 2,000 survivors remained to attempt to put their lives back together in this picturesque village-on-a-lake of 700 people where no Jew had ever lived, and many of whose inhabitants had either fled the Russians or were now evacuated by them to provide housing for the *Sternlager* survivors.

Until July 1945 (by which time almost all had left), the three principal activities that filled the survivors' lives were finding food, recuperating, and burying the endless victims of typhus. These included some nineteen of the town's own burghers and its mayor, who had contracted the dreaded disease from their visitors. Yet among those alive today, testimonies about those months in Troebitz are surrounded by a peculiar haze. While survivors recall people and events in the *Sternlager* with great precision, memories about the summer of healing in Troebitz remain almost entirely without texture.

My mother, father, and I (not yet three years old) were on this Lost Transport, and 50 years later, at the very end of April 1995, I was invited by a recently formed group, the "Lost Transport Victims Memorial Society," to join a journey of remembrance starting in Amsterdam, pausing in Bergen-Belsen, and winding its way to Troebitz where a memorial wall bearing the names of the victims would be unveiled. I was also asked to address the group when it arrived in Bergen-Belsen. In what follows, the material in italics consists of somewhat amended excerpts from that talk.

WITH the Jewish memorial in Bergen-Belsen at my back, the sun in my eyes, and a sharp wind blowing my manuscript around, I recite my words. Four busloads of Troebitz survivors and their families gaze unsmilingly at me. Nearby lie the mass graves of Bergen-Belsen in unbearably neat mounds, with legends reading, typically, "Here rest 5,000 dead." I feel an enormous fatigue. It seems to me that evil wants to rest, and I am somehow disturbing it.

*We survivors are getting old, and as the end of our days draws near, we find that instead of receding into time, the Holocaust, notwithstanding that it occurred over 50 years ago, seems to draw nearer.*

JOSEPH A. POLAK, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, is rabbi and director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel House at Boston University.



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*As we move closer to the destiny we ourselves were then spared, as we prepare to join our relatives and friends in the darkness of that Night and in the light of that darkness, the Holocaust, instead of fading, seems to beckon us. It haunts the fullness of our hearts when we sit in our dwellings, when we walk along our way, when we lie down, and when we rise up.*

*It sits not in the center of our perception, but at the periphery. Like the angel of death, it lurks. Whether our eyes are open or whether they are closed, the Holocaust waits for a momentary distraction, and then it appears. Not far from the daily work of our hands, not far from the play-noise of our children and grandchildren, sits the delirium, sits the typhus; not far, the hunger; not far, the trains.*

*No danger, then, of the Holocaust being forgotten. Memory, these days, at least for us, is not at risk. It is omnipresent. Sometimes it even feels as though it would take over experience. Sometimes we have to fight to continue living in Amsterdam and Boston and Jerusalem instead of in Westerbork, Bergen-Belsen, and Troebitz.*

*And so, even as the Holocaust has begun to revisit us, he have decided to come here and revisit it.*

On the last day of our journey, an American survivor in her seventies approaches me. "Your speech bore right into my heart," she says. "Do you want to know how I spend my Sundays in America? Not with my family, which is big, appreciative, and loving. No—I go to the Holocaust memorial in our town, which is indoors, and sit near the names and the memorabilia. There, somehow, I am in my element; there, believe it or not, is where I feel most at home."

*We are here, then, not just to remember the dead, whom we remember every day. We are here to remember the living. We are here to remember ourselves: to remember who we were in those days, and what it was we went through.*

Where the memorials and mass graves are is not where the *Sternlager* was, I was told. The place that today is Bergen-Belsen throws memory into disarray. Bergen-Belsen the concentration camp was burned to a crisp by the British to prevent further spread of the typhus from which my father later died, and to show that an era of evil was over. But how wrong they were! Their flamethrowers destroyed any visual clues to jog our memories.

TO VISITORS the mass graves bring wells of tears, but survivors, who know what happened, who were part of the horror yet have trouble distinguishing between history and nightmare—such survivors are not helped by these harrowing mounds, or by the photographs in the Bergen-Belsen documentation center, or by the empty green fields that now form the heart of where the deepest mud and the greatest squalor on earth once reigned. Nor did the British flames end the evil of the Holocaust. For the survivors on this journey, while the Holocaust of history was over, the Holocaust of memory has grown stronger each day.

*We are here to testify not merely to the mass murder, but to our own experiences. We are here to see if it all happened the way we remember it, or—for some of us with the amnesias of childhood or the amnesia that comes from too much horror—we are here to see whether it happened the way we were told it happened. And we are more than aware that in reviewing this episode of our lives, we could be changing the way we remember it, and the way we will tell it to our children.*

*We are here to see whether the biographies we have been telling (and not telling) are true, for we are haunted by the question of—how could they be true?*

How is it possible that I, less than three years old in Bergen-Belsen, survived it? Surely I am a fraud, the victim of a liar's tale—a tale about which I *remember* nothing, yet which I somehow feel doomed to repeat?

Dr. Thomas Rahe is the young, astute, unsentimental German historian whose efforts have gone far to make the documentation center at the present site of Bergen-Belsen a place where, at least with lists of names and numbers, reality and history *can* in fact be checked. He and I find each other walking along the railway platform. "Close to 600 children survived Bergen-Belsen," he points out to me, "due to its better conditions before 1945. Six hundred is more than any other concentration camp. The Bergen-Belsen children will be the last survivors, the last to be able to testify to what the Nazis wrought." He is seeking, he tells me, to make his list of child survivors as complete as possible, and urges me to get others to register with him.

We child survivors change the iconography of the Holocaust. We are not small and gaunt, with dark heads and shadows under our eyes, or blond and overweight like many of the older survivors of Auschwitz I have come to know. Most of my fellow child survivors seem to know no Yiddish. They speak English and Dutch and Hebrew without accents. They are breezy, they have a light touch; the shadows from which they emerge, and to which they often retreat, are for the most part imperceptible.

*How could the tales be true? How is it possible to survive the filth, the hunger, and the cold? How is it possible to survive the humiliation? We are here not merely to testify to the reality of one another's experience; we are here to examine our reluctance to testify.*

*We don't want to testify, because our bodies and souls were not created to witness such scenes, our minds not fashioned to contain them, much less to recall them.*

*We don't want to testify, because every testimony is in itself a betrayal: if we were all fashioned as equals, why should they have died and we survived? We can*

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*make no sense of how we were selected and not selected; we cannot fathom the explanation, and our inability to explain has led us down a road of guilt; for some, even of shame.*

*In the end, then, we are here to reflect on why we were given 50 years more than the others, and to consider what we have done with those years.*

As the bus moves steadily through the lush German countryside, which is beautiful yet whose beauty evades me, I move to the front, sit down in the tour guide's jumpseat, and tell my Holocaust tale. Soon others follow, and amid weeping and, surprisingly, much laughter, I discover there are survivors younger than I who remember even less, but who provide me with badly needed doses of reality.

Naturally the older ones remember more. One, about five years older than I, recalls the depths of the hunger, of fighting over potato peels, of stealing and foraging without shame. Another, perhaps ten years older, tells of winter problems: "My shoes collapsed, and they were open at the toes and I got frostbite and was afraid of gangrene. Until I learned that an effective way of treating the frostbite was with the warmth of my own urine."

And stories of enormous dignity: on your birthday, everyone in your family would give you his ration of bread. An SS officer took pity on a child whipped for stealing potatoes, and smuggled him fresh bread. Matzot were baked in Bergen-Belsen for Passover 1944. On the train to Troebitz, which kept stopping, and thereby affording new opportunities to bury the dead, an uncle reminded his nephew of the requirement that the traveler's prayer be recited anew each day, and not merely at the beginning of a journey.

*But we are not here, in Bergen-Belsen, merely to speak to ourselves and to one another. We are also here in what has surely become the most contaminated, most wretched spot on earth to speak to God.*

*For the survivor, speaking to God is perhaps more difficult than it is for others. I have seen survivors pray three times a day in their synagogues and not speak to God; I have seen them teach the deepest secrets of the Torah and not speak to God; I have heard them sing songs of the Sabbath and not speak to God. Only when they recite memorial prayers have I seen them speak to God; in the midst of this inventory of names which no sane mind can apprehend, I have seen them address their Maker. One man I knew would recite the prayer "Lord, full of mercy" for the six children he lost at Auschwitz—one prayer at a time, one child at a time, pronouncing each name carefully and slowly until I was certain the Court of Heaven and the Court of Earth could bear it no longer, and I myself wanted to flee his presence and escape from an accusation from which there was no hiding.*

*Today, in this place, I will try to speak to God. I will speak only on my own behalf, not merely because I represent no one but myself, but also because there are friends among us who are nonbelievers, and after the Holocaust I have come to feel their ache and to respect their silence.*

IN THE charming town of Bergen we are wined and dined by the Minister of Culture for Lower Saxony. He is calm, remarkably sane and clear, and makes a brief speech. Eighty-five percent of all Germans today, he tells us, were five years old or less during the war. The inheritance our parents left us is the moral squalor that was the Holocaust. Each day Germans need to deal with this inheritance. One way they can do it, he continues, is by putting up money for institutions like the documentation center at Bergen-Belsen, where an effort is being made to list every single one of the 120,000 inmates of the camp, so that, in his words, "the names do not ever lapse into anonymity."

To which I reply:

There is nothing you can do that will ever redeem either your parents or yourselves from the moral squalor you describe. No amount of money, no amount of virtue can ever bring light to the darkness your country has created. The deeds of your parents cannot be forgotten, and as long as memory stirs, as long as the word Auschwitz continues to bring a shudder to the human frame, you are doomed to be their representatives, and your hands will be stained with blood that you yourselves may not have spilled. For as long as people remember history, or hear a Jewish story, or see a Jewish child, you are destined both to take responsibility for this darkness and never, ever to be forgiven for it.

(But of course I say no such thing.)

IN BERLIN, we are taken on a bus tour of the city. We begin at the zoo, and our guide, who has clearly not been clued-in to her new charges, opens along the following lines:

"Welcome to Berlin. Two-and-a-half hours is a short time to see all the history of this city, but we will do our best. Most bus tours of Berlin begin right here at the zoo, so perhaps I will tell you something about it, to give you a sense of what the city has gone through. In 1939, before the war, Berlin had not one but two zoos, which boasted more than 10,000 animals. In 1945, only one zoo was left, with barely 90 animals. . . ."

A slow titter runs through our bus. Someone needs to fill her in. This is what I tell her:

In 1933, Berlin boasted 172,000 Jews and at least sixteen synagogues. These Jews, unlike the animals, were asked to leave, and so in 1939 Berlin was down to 83,000 Jews. But most of those were murdered, so that by 1945 there were only 5,000 Jews left, and while you still had a zoo, you didn't have a single synagogue. With all due respect, madam, your remarks make me wonder: whom do Berliners miss more, the elephants or the Jews?

(But of course I say no such thing.)

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FINALLY our small armada heads toward Troebitz. Security is tight—there are two police helicopters overhead and our bus, the first in a caravan of four, is preceded by a cruiser with its blue lights flashing and its klaxon blaring. For many, the terrifying, come-and-go sound triggers a memory of the Gestapo, and brings us close to tears.

What will Troebitz be like? Will the villagers be there, or will they hide in their attics and peer out from behind drawn shades? Will Troebitz remember us? Will we remember Troebitz?

The survivors spill out of the buses as if they had not been allowed outdoors for months, and gather, for the first time, for a group photograph. The atmosphere is electric, the mood high. This is an event—indeed, a scene—that is not likely to be repeated; a return of incalculable moral vengeance, of great triumph. See, we the begrimed, the humiliated of the earth, have returned! We lived! We have made something of these all-but-stamped-out lives!

The villagers of Troebitz are present in large numbers: the mayor, a nephew of the one who died of typhus; the storekeepers; the housewives; and most of all, the high-school students. I work with students at home, and I am at once drawn to these. Their faces are exceedingly straight and innocent, though not naive. They look calmly and directly at me; it is clear that they know everything.

Come, they say, come and see our exhibit. In the Town Hall we explore a project composed jointly by the region's high schools: a photographic display, with commentary, of the journey of the Lost Transport, complete with a chilling table-sized model of Bergen-Belsen, photographs of the liberation of a kind which children should not have to see, maps of the railroad routes, and a list of victims buried in Troebitz, including my father.

No Jew had returned to Troebitz for 40 years. In 1985, conscience got hold of one survivor who came to see under what farmland his father's grave might lie. What he found instead was an impeccably kept Jewish cemetery; his father's gravestone was intact, maintained as it had been left in 1945, with the flowers tended as if by a member of the family.

"Two thousand people showed up in our village of 700," the mayor tells us. "We didn't invite them, and they didn't want to be here. But we did what we could." Troebitz had remembered us with dignity, and we, as we weep deep tears at the memorial service in the small Jewish cemetery overlooking the lake, we remember Troebitz.

*I begin my prayer with a story.*

*Master of the Universe, You Who remember all things forgotten, remember the little four-year-old boy as he stood in that white hospital room in Eindhoven in 1946. In that big white bed lay an unfamiliar woman, claiming to be his mother. But this could not be his mother! When he had last seen his mother seven months ago on a train in Troebitz, she was a bag of bones weighing 50 pounds, crazy with delirium.*

*Creator of Heaven and Earth, You before Whom there lies only eternity, before Whose glorious throne there is no forgetting, remember, I beg You, that moment in the hospital room, where in the presence of the priests and the nuns, the woman in the bed finally succeeds in persuading this child that she really is his mother. Remember how the mother, resisting tears, asks the child to open the drawer in the white night table next to her bed. The child obeys, and there, among a sea of chocolates and candies, he finds his gifts: the small red prayerbook, the ritual undergarment with its fringes.*

*Do You hear, O Listener to the prayers of Your People Israel—that it never occurred to her to think that You had abandoned her on that dark Night? Father of Compassion, You Whose eye observes, Whose ear hears, You Who each day enters the inventory of our virtues in a book, know that this was not an isolated case. Those Jews who were religiously observant before the Holocaust for the most part maintained their observance after the Holocaust.*

*Master of the Universe, in the Night we weep, but in the dawn, do we not sing Your praises?*

*Lord of Wonders, look upon us—orphaned and widowed, haunted and half-crazed by a Night which refuses to end, are we not back? Are there not more students studying Your Torah now than before the Night? Do not more Jews speak Your Holy Tongue now than before the Night? Are not our young men and women, especially when they don that green uniform of the army of Israel, every bit as prepared to die for their people as was the generation of the Night—who had no choice?*

*And so, Master of the Universe—You Who reigned before aught was created—we the survivors approach You with the great question of the sages about liberation: why is this Night different from all other Nights? Have we not suffered enough? How long shall we be haunted by the trains and by the typhus? How long will the barking of dogs and the sounds of German bring sweat to our palms? Is not this the darkest Night of all? Have we not suffered enough?*

*Master of the Universe, forgive me if I call upon all who are buried here, and in Troebitz, and in Auschwitz and Treblinka, and in the other mountains of human ash, to join with those of us gathered here today, to form a rally of protest. You in Whose hand lies the spirit of every living thing: when will the Night finally become the Dawn, the memories be given meaning, the nightmares become dreams? When will the Great Sabbath finally arrive, whereon, as You have promised, the lion shall finally lie down with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them?*

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# A More Perfect Union?

## *Toward a New Federalism*

Wilfred M. McClay

THE political insurgency that has transformed the face of American politics in the past year bears witness to the power of ideas. That the prestige media should only slowly have begun to acknowledge this fact should surprise no one. Aside from being very ungenerous, ABC's Peter Jennings was also very obtuse when he interpreted the 1994 elections as a collective "temper tantrum." Now, less than a year later, it is clear that something far different, and far more significant, has been emerging in American political life.

An intellectual shift is taking shape, one whose momentum has been gradually building for several decades, and whose eventual effects upon our understanding of government, public life, the Constitution, the political parties, citizenship, and much else besides, are likely to be deep and enduring. The shift is being driven by a serious erosion of confidence in the institutions and works of government, and most particularly of the federal government. Most thoughtful observers will readily admit that this erosion has occurred. But they do not agree about its meaning.

Some find nothing good to say about it. They see it as sheer delusion, or as evidence of the American public's fecklessness and immaturity, or—worse—its propensity for the paranoid style. Or they see anti-governmental disgust as a cheap, self-indulgent, and self-serving posture—another case in which selfish and ungrateful Americans look for someone else to blame for their imperfect lives. Or they point to the public's notoriously split-minded attitudes toward Big Government—cut the entitlements, but not mine; Congress is obscenely corrupt, but my bacon-delivering Congressman is OK—as evidence that it has not really thought its position through, or does not have the moral seriousness to be consistent.

There is a measure of truth in each of these observations. But they miss the larger issues at stake. In a democratic polity, which relies upon public support for its legitimacy, the pervasiveness of such anti-government sentiment is itself a fact of profound and worrisome importance, one that cannot be merely scolded or ridiculed out of being. Like it or not, the fact will have to be dealt with. As for the matter of contradictory views, are they really so surprising? Are they not precisely the ambivalent attitudes one would expect a favor-dispensing government to engender in its favor-accepting population? And as for the question of delusion, can one really fault Americans who wonder why their government, which claims the right to regulate the minutiae of its citizens' lives and businesses, should nevertheless be unable to provide those same citizens with safe streets, secure borders, and a balanced national budget?

It is frustration over just these issues that led to the success of the Contract With America, and is fueling the drive toward structural changes like the balanced-budget amendment, term limits, school choice, welfare reform, income-tax reform, privatization, and devolution—reforms intended to make government smaller, and more accountable to those it serves. Such reforms have significance in their own right. But they are also the leading indicators of changes in our understanding of government, and perhaps even of the trajectory of modern American history.

### II

UNTIL recently, that history was told largely as the steady and inevitable triumph of nationalism: that is, the triumph of the nationalizing and centralizing forces in American life over a multitude of local, provincial, regional, or particular concerns.

American political history has been punctuated by a series of such struggles. In the Founding period, the far-sighted and continental-minded men who proposed the Constitution prevailed over the more backward-looking and localistic anti-Federalists. In the Civil War, a conception of the United States as an indissoluble national union prevailed over the lingering claims of state sovereignty. And so it went, with the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment, the Progressive movement, World War I, the New Deal, the postwar civil-rights movement, the Great Society—each becoming a land-

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mark on the broadening path to a more powerful and comprehensive central government. Each was a victory for what Herbert Croly, the founding editor of the *New Republic*, called "the national idea"—the belief that all that is highest and most desirable in our culture is expressed by and in national institutions, and the enlarged sense of community and collective purpose they embody.

As the national idea rose, so did a more expansive view of national political institutions as a necessary counter to the growing forces of economic concentration. The Progressive movement, in which Croly was a central figure, played a crucial role in this development. Distressed by the corrupting influence of private interests upon government, but supremely confident of the ability of university-trained social-scientific experts to discern the public interest, Progressive reformers wanted a vigorous national government to take a firm hand in regulating the nation's economic, social, and moral life.

That such a robust government might surpass the limits ordained by the Constitution did not trouble them. Rather, they believed, a powerfully activist national government could preserve the essential thrust of the Constitution precisely by being free of its particulars. It could, in Croly's famous phrase, use "Hamiltonian means" to achieve "Jeffersonian ends." Such a premise has dominated most efforts at large-scale reform in this century.

Until now, that is. At today's distance from the Progressives' naive confidence, one cannot contemplate their arguments without a profound sense of irony. For it is now very hard to convince Americans that the anointed experts are wise and disinterested, that elected officials really represent them, that civil servants really serve, or that their government can ever be made efficient and competent.

Instead, a growing number have come to see their government, and particularly their federal government, as itself one of the most parasitic and avaricious of interest groups; and they have come to suspect all talk of "the public interest" as the first refuge of scoundrels, a high-sounding cover for mere aggrandizement. They can readily see what a wealthy city Washington has become. They see how many of its inhabitants make a handsome living off the constant churning and manipulation of causes and issues, important and trivial alike. And, perhaps most devastatingly, they see all around them the disastrous consequences of expensive and ill-considered government social policies, consequences that no spin doctor can explain away. As Washington has waxed, it seems to them that the nation has waned.

Small wonder, then, that they are filled with contempt for government, and for the political class. They did not need Waco, conspiracy theories, or even Ross Perot to reach such conclusions. Indeed, the sudden prominence of such phenomena in American life is more an effect than a cause of the current disaffection.

Still, disaffection is not a policy initiative. And downsizing, however warranted, does not amount to a theory of government. To rail against the venality, waste, and absurdity of Big Government is easy enough. To suggest what can plausibly be put in its place is quite another matter.

## III

THE concept of "devolution," much favored by conservative politicians these days, represents the attempt to translate anti-Washington sentiment into the language of public policy. But the term's meaning, and its practical consequences, remain poorly defined. Perhaps that has been partly by design, for the abstractness of the term blurs an important distinction, and thereby obscures a potential source of political conflict.

Is devolution designed (in the political scientist Charles Kesler's formulation) "to empower state and local governments" as against the federal government; or is it designed "to empower individuals against government at all levels"? That is a crucial difference. The word's usage would seem to incorporate both "federalist" and "libertarian" goals, but the two have very different premises and implications. If only one of them comes to predominate, that will make an enormous difference in the shape reform takes.

Such an imbalance seems possible, even likely. The "libertarian" aspects of devolution represent far and away the easier sell, since they comport so well with our culture's boundless regard for the language of individual rights, and its distrust of government at all levels. House Speaker Newt Gingrich states his own position with characteristic bluntness in the pages of his new book, *To Renew America*:

> [M]uch as I sympathize with both state and local governments, what we really want to do is to devolve power all the way out of government. . . . Republicans envision a decentralized America in which responsibility is returned to the individual.

This is a popular position. Any systematic weakening of the nanny state is bound to be welcome news to many Americans. Such an emphasis also complements the growing interest among decentralists in strengthening "civil society," the complex and largely spontaneous network of nongovernmental voluntary associations, such as religious, professional, and philanthropic organizations, that involve themselves in public affairs and mediate between the individual and government.

But it must also be said that the reversion of power from Washington to the individual, far-

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reaching and beneficial though its effects might be, does not really challenge the dominance of the national idea. It does not seek to augment or protect the independent authority of state and local political institutions, or to equip states and localities to contend with, and act as a check upon, national power. Even the unfortunate word "devolution" itself carries this sense of the nation's primacy, since in its technical sense it denotes the transfer to a subordinate entity of power that remains under the central authority's rightful control. Revenue sharing and block grants may be expressions of devolution and decentralization. But they are not expressions of federalism, properly understood.

And what is that? It would, indeed, be hard to imagine a political concept more poorly understood than federalism. Only a handful of dedicated scholars have continued to regard it as a subject even worth studying. And the paradoxical use of the term "federal government" to denote the national government has misled most ordinary Americans into associating federalism with centralism.

Yet quite the opposite is true. The genius of federalism is that it divides political power between and among units of government—central and local, higher and lower—in such a way that all retain certain elements of autonomy and self-governance. Federalism thereby offers the prospect of reconciling the advantages of independence with the advantages of combination, the cohesiveness of small-scale local governance with the resources and external security provided by a unified nation.

For a federal system to preserve its character, however, it must find clear and consistent ways of strictly limiting the powers of the central authority. The best way of doing so is through a written constitution, which defines the central government's sphere of legitimate activity, and at the same time assures the local or provincial governments that their spheres of autonomy will not be violated or compromised.

The Framers of the U.S. Constitution tried to do just that as they set about, in the famous phrase, "to form a more perfect union." They created a national government which, though powerful enough to overcome the patent deficiencies of the Articles of Confederation, was still restricted to certain enumerated powers, a limitation made explicit in the Tenth Amendment. One can argue over whether the government established by the Constitution was federal in the strictest sense, since it was clearly preeminent in many respects and was formed by the consent of "We the People" (and not, as Patrick Henry lamented, "We the States"). James Madison himself described the Constitution as a "composition" of federal and national systems, but he emphatically did not envision the Constitution as the blueprint for a consolidated national government which would completely supersede the separate authority of the states. Not only did he presume the continuing vitality of the states, but he felt confident that they would always enjoy a certain primacy. As he put it in *Federalist* 45:

> [E]ach of the principal branches of the federal government will owe its existence more or less to the favor of the state governments, and must consequently feel a dependence, which is much more likely to beget a disposition too obsequious than too overbearing toward them.

But Madison could hardly have been more wrong. Given the near-complete success of the very consolidation that the Founders dreaded, that Madison thought unlikely, and that was made possible by a wholesale departure from the kind of federalism the Constitution prescribes, it would be easy to conclude that the restoration of such federalism in our time is a quixotic undertaking.

The historical picture is not an encouraging one, and is made worse by federalism's unfortunate past affinity with bad causes like slavery and racial segregation. Although national politicians from Robert Taft to Ronald Reagan have sought to counter the New Deal's consolidation of centralized power, their successes have been few in number, and largely rhetorical in character. The steady growth of Leviathan has come to seem as invincible and inevitable as a force of nature. What reason is there to think that one more roll of the dice at this time, when the central government is bigger than ever before, and when the public barely understands what federalism means, can produce results that have eluded so many predecessors?

## IV

SEVERAL things *are* different now, however. One, of course, is the electorate's generalized disgust with its national government. This has produced a climate of openness to change, and has helped elect politicians with an interest in devolution. But even more important is the potential for substantive change promised by some of the recent actions of the Supreme Court.

To be sure, the Court's overall direction in recent years has often seemed confused or inconsistent, and it continues to be deeply divided. Nevertheless, a narrow majority of the Court's current members appears willing, and in some cases eager, to revisit or overturn decisions and precedents that have disabled federalism in the past. Such leadership is of crucial importance: as the final arbiter of the Constitution's meaning, the Court has it in its power to revive a framework of constitutional protections that could make a thriving federalism possible once again—and without which the cause of federalism will most likely continue to languish and decay.

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To effect such a revival would be an act of enormous consequence, for it would involve reversing the "constitutional revolution of 1937," the juncture at which the Court began to uphold the regulatory agenda of the New Deal and thus cleared the way for the unhindered growth of centralized power. After 1937, as the historian William Leuchtenburg has observed, the Supreme Court "upheld every New Deal statute that came before it," and by so doing, "legitimated the arrival of the Leviathan State." One of the principal tools employed in the expansion of that state was an infinitely elastic reading of the Constitution's "commerce clause," which, in its original acceptation, had merely granted Congress limited authority over the regulation of interstate commerce, a necessary and sensible improvement upon the Articles of Confederation.

After 1937, however, the clause became centralism's entering wedge, since almost any activity has some arguable connection, however remote, with interstate commerce. Hence a freely interpreted commerce clause could be, and since 1937 has been, employed as a pretext for virtually any act of federal intervention in the affairs of states and localities.

THE present Court, however, has begun to rein in the commerce clause. A highly significant case touching upon these issues was this spring's *United States* v. *Lopez*, in which the Court held, by a 5-4 margin, that Congress had exceeded its constitutional limits in making it a federal crime to possess a gun within 1,000 feet of a school. The decision was particularly important because it addressed itself not to the merits of such a law *per se*, but directly to the issue of federalism: whether local law enforcement was properly a responsibility of state and local authorities, and therefore not the concern of Congress.

Both the majority and the dissenting minority agreed that the case hinged upon the Court's interpretation of the commerce clause. In the past, the day would have been carried by tortured logic: that the guns in question might lead to violence, and violence would impair the educational environment, and thereby adversely affect the national economy—not only because the nation's global competitiveness and economic well-being ultimately depend upon an educated workforce, but because under such conditions, publishers sell fewer textbooks and stores sell fewer school supplies. Such, in fact, was precisely the reasoning of Justice Stephen Breyer in his dissent in the *Lopez* case, and it was hardly more convoluted than the Court's in, for example, *Katzenbach* v. *McClung* (1964), the landmark civil-rights case of 30 years ago which barred racial discrimination in restaurants partly on the grounds that restaurants refusing to serve blacks would buy and sell less food, and thereby depress the economy.

But such reasoning did not prevail in this instance. Instead, Chief Justice William Rehnquist chose the occasion to reaffirm that the constitutional doctrine of enumerated powers is a "first principle" of American government.

That the Court's "federalist" contingent did not see *Lopez* as an isolated skirmish was confirmed later this spring in the case of *U.S. Term Limits* v. *Thornton*, which struck down state-imposed term limits. Though in this case the Court's "centralists" prevailed by a 5-4 margin (thanks to the defection of Justice Anthony Kennedy), the vigorous dissent by Justice Clarence Thomas, also signed by Justices Antonin Scalia and Sandra Day O'Connor, and by Chief Justice Rehnquist, made it clear that the restoration of federalism as a "first principle" of American political institutions is now very much on the table, and will remain there for some time to come. It also appears likely that Thomas will turn out to be the Court's most forceful and committed spokesman for the federal idea in years to come.

Such developments represent a dramatic reversal of the position reached by the Court as recently as 1985, at the height of the Reagan administration, in the case of *Garcia* v. *San Antonio Metropolitan Transit Authority*. The *Garcia* decision, also by a 5-4 margin, argued that the states had no constitutionally protected powers, and that there are no "discrete limitations on the objects of federal authority." Hence it was a matter for the Congress, rather than the Supreme Court, to determine what powers the states would or would not be permitted to exercise. In short, the majority in *Garcia* offered an understanding of federalism that was national and central in all but name, and it was left for the minority to protest, which it did in the name of "almost 200 years of the understanding of the constitutional status of federalism."

Today, for the moment, the shoes seem to have changed feet, and so it is no wonder that the *New York Times*'s Linda Greenhouse, in writing about the term-limits case, should have charged that the Court is now but "a single vote shy of reinstalling the Articles of Confederation." The federalists on the Court seek nothing of the kind, of course. But there can be no mistaking their intellectual seriousness and determination, and their willingness to initiate bold changes. Because of them, the prospects for a restored federalism now appear far more favorable than they have been in recent memory. Nor can it carry much weight for their opponents on the Court to protest, as Justices Breyer and David Souter have done in the wake of *Lopez*, that the present Court is acting in dangerously unrestrained ways, unsettling issues thought to have been settled. After all, unsettlement was what the 1994 elections were all about.

Even so, the preponderance of 5-4 decisions indicates that we are still a long way from a solid

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consensus on these matters in the Supreme Court, let alone in the nation. Leviathan has many friends and many more dependents, and it has barely begun to fight. There is not a single one of us who does not at some point feel the pull of its blandishments. In the fierce budget battles now facing the Congress, we will be regaled with countless examples of the difficulties and dislocations entailed in any reduction of the size and scope of the federal government. Given the fact that so many Americans no longer have the slightest idea what federalism is, its advocates will have to proceed as if the public were being introduced to an entirely new vision of their country.

## V

THE federal idea is a delicate balancing act, and it can go wrong in more than one way. It would be just as much a violation of the federal principle to cripple the central government altogether as it would be to give it unlimited power. In that sense, the anarchism proposed by some anti-government groups, a form of self-proclaimed devolution, is precisely the wrong answer to the challenge of an overly large central government. Indeed, one might say that the anarchists and the centralists represent two sides of the same coin, both unable to conceive of what a properly focused and constitutionally limited central government might look like within a healthy federal system.

Federalism, to repeat, was not somehow incidental to the Framers' intentions. It was absolutely essential, and we need to remember why. They distrusted power, distrusted government, distrusted numerical majorities, distrusted human nature. They believed in "the necessity of auxiliary precautions" (*Federalist* 51) to guard against the abuses of power to which popular governments are prone. Hence the need to devise a government that deliberately set up "opposite and rival interests" that could check and balance one another, using "ambition . . . to counteract ambition." Federalism was a crucial part of this arrangement. The separation of national and state governments, in tandem with the separation of powers within each level of government, provided "a double security" for the people's rights, through the effective dispersion of power.

That essentially negative, protective function of federalism is complemented by an equally important positive function, one which has received far less attention than it deserves: preserving the integrity of smaller-scale forms of political organization. A federal regime properly constituted should offer a multitude of arenas for meaningful acts of citizenship—the kind of acts that elevate and deepen, while binding people more closely and affectionately to their locale and nation.

This perspective on citizenship has its roots in the characteristic outlook of the early nation. The older classical-republican conception of virtue, which so profoundly influenced the Founding generation, stressed that the individual could not realize his human nature in its fullness without involvement in public life—and that a strong republic depended upon such public-spirited individuals for its existence. Virtue was the health of the state, no less than of the energetic citizen.

Yet as Tocqueville and other observers would soon notice, the conditions of American life tended to draw individuals away from virtuous devotion to public affairs, and into the single-minded pursuit of economic advancement and personal well-being. Tocqueville in particular greatly feared the consequent tendency toward privatism in American life (which he called individualism), both in its effects upon individual souls and on the prospects for a genuinely self-governing polity.

Fortunately, he believed, the American Founders had well understood this, too. Not being under the illusion that a national community alone could provide an adequate arena for citizenship, they took care to "infuse political life into each portion of the territory in order to multiply to an infinite extent opportunities of acting in concert for all the members of the community." In other words, Tocqueville saw the federal idea as a key element in the American attempt to reconcile the republican conception of virtuous citizenship with the self-interested dynamism of liberal individualism. By permitting citizens maximum autonomy in the administration of minor or local affairs, a well-ordered federal regime draws them more generally into a responsible public life.

Which brings us back to the current interest in the principle of devolution. Political theorists from Aristotle to Montesquieu postulated that for a republic to stay a republic, it had to stay relatively small, geographically and demographically. Their insistence on this point may have reflected a presumption that a truly self-governing community was also, to some extent, a moral community, and that excessive size fatally undermined that possibility. Madison, in his celebrated rejoinder to such theorists in *Federalist* 10, explained to the contrary how an "extended republic" could control the tendency toward faction in popular governments precisely by multiplying the type and number of factions.

Perhaps, however, Montesquieu's dictum about small republics, whatever its purely political truth, contains a powerful psychological truth, one that considerations of utility, economy of scale, and all the other arguments for larger size cannot entirely banish. "In order to commit ourselves to collective ends," observed the French social theorist Emile Durkheim, "we must have above all a feeling and affection for the collectivity." There

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must be some point of emotional entry, some point of congruency between the shape of the polity and the shape of the human heart, if that polity is to draw out the participation of citizens, and command their unfeigned loyalty and affection. Size and scale seem to have an irreducible importance. The challenge is to find ways of restoring the sense of congruency offered by smaller, more human-scale institutions, while retaining the advantages of national government.

## VI

OBVIOUSLY we no longer live in the 1780's, or even in the 1930's, and therefore the process of restoring federalism will also, to some extent, involve reinventing and rethinking it, piece by piece. The recovery of federalism will not require that the city of Washington be dismantled, the Interstate Highway System rolled up, the Marine Corps disbanded, and all forms of national-scale economic and political organization banished. But it *will* require attempting to reconcile the existence of such forms of organization with other forms, and other sets of political and social values, no less important in themselves and no less worthy of being represented in our political institutions.

That will be difficult work, far less immediately appealing than a more radical devolution that would sweep away government entirely. If we are serious about devolution, we will have to face the fact that, however attractive and desirable, it will not be a panacea, and that devolved power and responsibility may actually demand a lot more of us, day in and day out, than Big Government has done.

Here, indeed, lies the great irony. Self-reliance and self-governance are profound human needs, and offer profound human satisfactions. But self-governance, far from getting government off our backs and out of our lives, will require that we devote a good deal more sustained attention to public affairs than we do now—not only to the relatively interesting sphere of national politics but also to the tedium of the town council, local school board, public-service commission, and the like. Citizenship (to turn a phrase of Oscar Wilde's about socialism) takes a lot of evenings, and there is reason to wonder whether many of us will not, in the end, decide to pass on that particular bargain, preferring to put our energies elsewhere, and accepting the inevitable alternatives as the best to be had. For all our vaguely approving talk about civic virtue, we have yet to ask ourselves whether we are really prepared to pay the price for it.

In this connection, it should also be remembered that our present enlarged national government arose, not out of malice or absent-mindedness, but out of a commendable desire to address real and grievous problems of economic instability and social inequality that were not being otherwise addressed. State governments did not have a particularly good record in these matters. Paradoxically, whatever advances state governments have made in recent years in the areas of both efficiency and equity probably would not have occurred without the very nationalizing forces the states are now attempting to resist. In any event, though the social and economic problems of the last decades may not have been solved by Big Government, and indeed may have been only intensified by it, they were not entirely its creation, either, and we will have to reckon with them in Big Government's absence.

Yet the picture is not entirely gloomy. Durkheim observed that, in France, a "vicious circle" inhibited the effort to produce more vital decentralized institutions. On the one hand, "associations can only spring up again when the feeling for association awakens"; but on the other hand, such a feeling "cannot awaken except within already existing institutions." Unlike France, the United States is fortunate in already having such institutions in place, however dependent or enfeebled they may appear at the moment. And the feeling of association, though perhaps not as powerful as it once was, still remains very much in evidence—not least in the myriad of anti-government movements. Perhaps it will yet be possible, through a series of bold devolutionary actions, to redirect some of those energies into the life of those institutions.

In any event, federalism's future will likely be decided by the answer to one question: do the states and localities, and the citizenry, now have both the will and ability to accept the pains and pleasures of greater responsibility, and thereby to bring the nation into a more balanced and more fully realized federalism? We may soon have a chance to find out. But one should not underestimate the degree to which we will have to change, individually and collectively, if that effort is to be anything more than a pause in the steady growth of Leviathan.

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# Egypt Against Israel

*David Bar-Illan*

THE existence of Israel's nuclear arsenal has never been acknowledged by the Israeli government, yet it is an open secret and, as such, has proved a most effective weapon. Not, however, in deterring conventional Arab attacks; this it has never done and was never intended to do. Israel did not contemplate the use of nuclear weapons when it was threatened with strangulation in 1967; nor did it consider the nuclear option in 1973, when it faced the very real possibility of military defeat. The purpose of its nuclear option is strictly to deter a nuclear or other nonconventional attack; in the case of conventional war, only the threat of total annihilation would make using nuclear weapons acceptable.

But if Israel's nuclear capability has a highly limited military function, it has nevertheless proved politically useful lately—to, of all people, Israeli doves. In leftist circles, the nuclear arsenal is regularly invoked these days as a kind of fail-safe mechanism that will guarantee the country's security when, as it is hoped, Israel withdraws from the territories it won in the Six-Day War of 1967.

The disarmingly simple rationale of the doves was recently summarized by Alouph Hareven, one of their more articulate spokesmen. A former military planner, Hareven is not given to utopian daydreams, and in particular he does not deny the possibility of a Syrian surprise attack if Israel should relinquish the Golan Heights. But in such an event, he wrote in a recent article, the Israeli government will only need to make a simple announcement:

> "You have violated the peace treaty, dear neighbors, severely endangering Israel and its security. If within six hours you do not withdraw your tanks beyond the border and behind the demilitarized zone, you will force us to consider hard decisions about Syrian population centers."

There is, of course, no chance that Israel would resort to the nuclear destruction of Syrian cities in response to a conventional military assault, if not for reasons of military doctrine then because doing so would almost certainly result in Israel's own demise. The Arab states are already in possession of vast arsenals of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction; within five years, Iran and Iraq will probably have nuclear weapons as well. To repeat: as long as the war is one in which Israel can prevail, even at the cost of a staggering number of casualties, it will not resort to nuclear force.

But the speciousness of Hareven's argument is not the point. For those in Israel who wish to make the case for withdrawal, which is to say the case against holding geostrategic assets, the existence of a nuclear option has been, by far, the most effective tactic in winning over the proverbial man in the street. Like Hareven, many ordinary Israelis beguile themselves with the fantasy that if their country should be attacked by its Arab neighbors after having conceded the advantage of territory in exchange for "peace," it will be justified—in the world's eyes as well as in its own—in "wiping them out" by means of atomic weapons.

SUCH bizarre notions, which in effect reduce Israel's defensive options to a nuclear Armageddon, have their function in Israel's domestic debate. But they also form the background to a peculiar development in recent months between Israel and its largest Arab neighbor.

Ever since it signed a peace treaty with Israel in the late 1970's, Egypt has maintained that comprehensive peace in the Middle East can only be achieved if Israel reverts to its "natural size"—the 1949 armistice lines which prevailed until the Six-Day War. It stands to reason, then, that Cairo, which was been almost completely silent on the nuclear issue for sixteen years, would be especially careful not to deprive the Israeli Left of its pet argument that the possession of nuclear weapons will make Israel safe no matter where the border might be.

Yet instead, and to the bafflement of many, Egypt last fall launched a fierce diplomatic campaign to pressure Israel into signing the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Had it acquiesced, Israel would have been required to pledge that it had no nuclear weapons and to open its (officially nonexistent) facilities to international

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inspection. In the course of this campaign, Egypt so maligned the Rabin government that, for the first time since the Egypt-Israel peace treaty was signed, the Israeli Foreign Ministry, hardly known as a hotbed of hawkish sentiment, felt compelled to prepare a position paper on ways to penalize Cairo.

To add to the confusion, the government of President Hosni Mubarak did not even bother to pretend that the purpose of its campaign was to make the Middle East free of nonconventional weapons. While savaging Israel for its refusal to allow inspections of its nuclear reactors, Cairo adamantly rejected proposals for an international inspection of its own considerable chemical- and biological-warfare capabilities. In the end, only persistent pressure by Washington, which was acutely aware of the damage being done to Israeli public opinion on the withdrawal front, caused Cairo to suspend, at least temporarily, its diplomatic assault.

But it is only on the surface that the sudden investment of energy, prestige, and influence in the NPT campaign can be viewed as a new departure for Egypt. In fact, it is wholly consistent with the country's concept of peace with Israel—if not, indeed, with Egypt's recent political direction altogether. That relations between the two nations are not quite as warm as, say, relations between Holland and Belgium, or the U.S. and Canada, is common knowledge. Few, however, realize how cold the "cold peace" has really been—and how cold it remains to this day, despite the removal of the Palestinian irritant with the September 1993 signing of the accord between Israel and the PLO.*

Some 40-odd agreements undertaken by Israel and Egypt under the terms of their peace treaty have not been implemented because of Egyptian intransigence. These range from trade, tourism, agricultural projects, transportation, and telecommunication to cultural relations, the exchange of youth delegations, and the cessation of anti-Israel propaganda. But that is hardly all. More than 40 Israelis have been murdered by terrorists and Egyptian soldiers *on Egyptian soil*, to total official indifference. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is still widely printed and distributed in Egypt, and Nazi-style propaganda against Israelis and Jews is rampant in the semi-official press. Polls in Egypt show that most members of the intelligentsia oppose peace with Israel, and the few Egyptian scientists and journalists who have dared to visit the country have been ostracized and boycotted by their professional guilds on their return. Israeli tourists and diplomats have been accused of importing every imaginable scourge, from hoof-and-mouth disease to AIDS. And Israel has been charged with perpetrating virtually every terrorist act which the rest of the world associates with Muslim extremists, from Pan Am 103 to the World Trade Center bombing.

In 1986, President Mubarak himself abetted the escape of the murderers of Leon Klinghoffer on the *Achille Lauro* by providing them with a plane. Three years ago, Egypt led the campaign in the United Nations against the repeal of the resolution equating Zionism with racism. Despite frequent visits to Egypt by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and a recent official visit by President Ezer Weizman (which was specifically conditioned on an Egyptian commitment to reciprocate), Mubarak has resisted pleas to set foot on Israeli soil, refusing even to go to Eilat for a quick meeting with Rabin. To entice him to Jerusalem, the Israeli Foreign Ministry dropped a visit to the Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem from the proposed official itinerary, but still Mubarak said no.

Egypt's campaign to disarm Israel of its nuclear option has not been the only hostile act since the Oslo agreement with the PLO. Mubarak has used his country's considerable weight and influence in the Arab world to prevent the lifting of the economic boycott and the establishment of commercial and diplomatic relations with Israel. Although there has been some increase in trade relations since Oslo, the change seems impressive only because, in the preceding fourteen years, there was almost no activity whatsoever. From a total of $20 million in import-export business in 1991 (excluding the oil Israel buys from Egypt at premium prices), trade in 1994 amounted to $43 million—*half* the trade between Israel and Uruguay. But the Egyptian press still refuses to accept ads for Israeli enterprises, and Israel cannot bid on government-controlled projects, which constitute 80 percent of Egyptian business. The only real cooperation is in the agricultural sector where Egypt is sorely in need of help, and even that is minimal.

Perhaps most indicative of the state of relations was a much-ballyhooed conference on trade in the Middle East held last October in Casablanca. No fewer than eight Israeli cabinet ministers and scores of Jewish business moguls from the West attended this post-Oslo affair. For Israel's Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, the conference was to signal the launching of the "new Middle East," the beginning of a millennium of peace and plenty in which Israel would not only serve as an engine of economic progress for the whole area but would become a fully integrated member of the Arab League or even of a Middle East consortium modeled on the European Union.

Yet Egypt did not quite see things that way. A booklet prepared for the event by the government proposed an impressive list of national and international projects. Some of them were envisioned as passing through Israeli soil; but Israel itself was never once mentioned, nor did its name appear on any of the booklet's maps. One participant who had been on the Israeli negotiating

*For the story up till then, see "The Real Lessons of Camp David," by Rael Jean Isaac, COMMENTARY, December 1993.

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team with Egypt in the 1970's was reported as saying, incredulously, "You come to a conference on political and economic regional cooperation, and you see how Egypt erases Israel from the map, as if the whole area is contiguous Arab land."

The booklet, however, was nothing if not consistent with general Egyptian policy. No map printed in Egypt (or, for that matter, in Jordan, Syria, or any other of Israel's Arab neighbors) mentions Israel. An Israeli flag may fly over the building of the Israel embassy in Cairo, but no schoolchild in Egypt ever sees "Israel" in his atlas.

In short, and despite the Rabin government's acquiescence in virtually every Egyptian demand relating to the Palestinians, the mood between the two countries has only gotten worse. Even President Weizman, Israel's leading Egyptophile, has been moved to exclaim, "There is an ill wind blowing from the Nile."

Over the years, Egypt has not lacked excuses for its behavior. At first, it said, normalization would have to await Israel's complete withdrawal from the Sinai. Then, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon prompted a four-year recall of the Egyptian ambassador and an almost total freeze on relations. And there was also a more general excuse: throughout the 1980's, Egypt maintained that having been isolated and boycotted by its Arab brethren for making peace with Israel, it could not institute warm relations until it had "returned to the bosom of the Arab world." Finally, there have been other, pettier pretexts as well: a dispute over Taba, a piece of land the size of two football fields near Eilat; a quarrel over permission for the Arab residents of Rafiah on the Egyptian side of the Gaza Strip to join their brethren in Gaza; and the *intifada*, which prompted Egypt to demand that Israel recognize the PLO before normalization could become a reality.

Yet all these excuses were just that: excuses. Things did not noticeably improve after Israel's withdrawal from virtually all of Lebanon; and long after Egypt had recaptured its role as the leading Arab state—thanks largely to its treaty with Israel and the ensuing American aid which made it a regional power—the promised thaw failed to materialize. Now that Jerusalem has recognized the PLO and signed the Oslo agreement, a new condition has been manufactured: Israel must conclude its withdrawal to the 1967 lines and enter upon a peace treaty with Syria.

What is behind the Egyptian refusal not only to implement solemnly undertaken commitments but, as in the case of the booklet distributed at Casablanca, even to acknowledge Israel's existence? When queried, Egyptian officials and intellectuals reply that it is all the expression of a genuine fear. First, they say, Israel tried to conquer us militarily. Now, it is trying to subjugate us economically and displace us from our leading position in the Arab world.

Typical of this line is a recent article by Fawaz A. Gerges in *Foreign Affairs*, "Egyptian-Israeli Relations Turn Sour." Israel, Gerges writes, "hopes to construct a new regional order that is Middle Eastern instead of Arab, in which Israel would be the dominant economic power." At the Casablanca conference, he continues, statements by Foreign Minister Peres

> poured fuel on simmering Egyptian fears. Israeli actions and words confirmed Egyptian suspicions that Israel aims to dominate the area—at the expense of Egypt's regional role. To an Egyptian leadership already beleaguered by a rising tide of Islamic extremism, the marginalization of Egypt in the Arab arena would do intolerable harm to the internal stability of the regime.

Nor is "fear" of Israel restricted to the economic realm. As the Israeli military expert Gerald Steinberg has pointed out, Egypt today faces no external threats—yet despite that, and despite its dire economic condition, "it has a very large army and keeps two-thirds of its forces just outside the Sinai demilitarized zone." Egyptian war doctrine, however improbably, still views Israel as the country's main if not its only enemy. Thus, a "round table" of Egyptian military opinion, published in the pro-government weekly *Ruz el-Yusuf* on January 23, includes the following Orwellian statement in its introduction:

> Peace today is threatened by those who signed it. The threats of war come from Rabin and the Israelis. If there is no choice but to defend the peace by war, then so be it. We will explore, together, the possibility of having war for peace.

No less alarmist, and alarming, are the sentiments expressed in the "round table" by Egypt's former Minister of War: "I expect war with a certainty, because the agreements which have been signed and are being signed today lead to war." Or those expressed in the same place by the current Minister of War: "It's important to use the phase of peace to prepare for emergencies. . . . The Egyptian army is devoted now to developing its military capabilities and follows new weapons systems with great interest." Or those expressed by a former Egyptian chief of staff: "The combined weaponry of the Arab states today exceeds that of Israel. If all these weapons were directed against Israel, the Arab states could defeat Israel."

When the Egyptian military establishment talks openly of the weapons available to it, of course it is referring only to conventional arms, and of course it regularly and strenuously inveighs against Israel's nuclear capacity. But when it comes to weapons of mass destruction, Egypt itself has much to answer for. It was, after all, the first Arab country not only to develop chemical weapons but to use them (in the 1960's, during its war in Yemen). While concerting its plans with Syria prior to the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Egypt transferred chemical weapons wholesale to Dam-

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ascus. Since then, in part by cooperating with Iraq, it has enlarged its arsenal and made it more sophisticated, focusing on nerve agents and chemical warheads to be placed on surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs). All this, we are to believe, out of "fear" of Israel.

To say that Egypt's behavior is not what Israel expected when it signed the peace treaty sixteen years ago would be the understatement of the decade. When even a superdove like President Weizman can allow himself to complain in public, it is no wonder that others have begun to ask whether *anything* Israel does will change Egyptian attitudes. An eloquent example of the frustration of the "peace camp" could be found in an article that appeared last February in *Ha'aretz*, after a failed meeting between Peres and Mubarak over the nuclear issue. The article, written by the veteran columnist Uzi Benziman, was pessimistic in the extreme:

> The disappointing outcome of the Peres-Mubarak meeting raises the question whether this was just a failure to settle the disagreement on how best to denuclearize the Middle East or a much deeper phenomenon: the Arab world's rejection of Israel's efforts to integrate in the region. . . .
>
> Here is an alternative interpretation of Egyptian behavior: Mubarak, like all the other Arab rulers, accepts Israel only as a necessary evil. Neither he nor they have reconciled themselves, emotionally or intellectually, to the existence of a Jewish state in the Arab region. . . .

Benziman is not alone. It seems to be dawning on even the most optimistic Israelis that two monumental factors militate against their dream of regional integration. The first (addressed by Benziman) is that there is no such thing as "normalization" between a democracy and a police state. The kind of relationship envisioned in Peres's "New Middle East," the kind which would allow the establishment of an Arab-Israeli Benelux on the Mediterranean, can only exist among democracies. True, Egypt is not a totalitarian, backward tyranny like Hafez al-Assad's Syria, but its leader is "elected" without rivals and rules without constraints. Even Egypt's relatively unfettered press has lately been slapped with regulations imposing mandatory jail sentences on journalists who "besmirch" government officials or publish "untruths" or anything the government considers "inflammatory."

Under the pressure of militant Islamic fundamentalism, Egypt is also becoming less tolerant of minorities like its population of Christian Copts, who number between seven and twelve million, who trace their ancestry to ancient Egypt, and who represent no threat whatsoever to the regime. According to sources in the West, government mistreatment of Copts includes forced conversions, harassment, discrimination in education and in public-sector hiring, and the refusal of permits to repair or build churches.

This points to the second factor which separates Israel from the Arab world, above and beyond the unbridgeable gap between democracies and dictatorships: the increasing power and popularity of Islam in the region. Instead of becoming progressively secular and Westernized, as most observers predicted would be the case, Arab and Muslim countries are becoming increasingly traditional and fundamentalist. This development has little to do with poverty and deprivation; nor does it seem to have any intrinsic connection with exposure to Western ideas and mores. Until the overthrow of the Shah, Iran was not only one of the richest Muslim countries but the most "modern." Algeria, too, is relatively well-off, with a large middle class exposed to Western culture. And now extreme Islamic forces are enjoying a spectacular growth in two countries closely allied to the West, Turkey and Egypt.

To be sure, this growth is resisted by the government, and that resistance leads to acts like the June attempt on Mubarak's life, followed by the inevitable crackdown, followed by the no less inevitable reaction to the crackdown. But along with government resistance comes, again inevitably, government accommodation. Where Israel is concerned, the process of Islamization has reinforced the conviction among even moderate Arabs and Muslims that the Jewish state is what the extremists say it is: a foreign body in the Middle East, an alien growth which must be excised. Mubarak himself referred to Israel in a recent interview in the German weekly *Der Spiegel* as "a knife plunged into the heart of the nations of this region." Clearly, he was suggesting that it is a knife which should be removed.

This does not mean that a war is imminent. For all their awesome military power, unprecedented in its sophistication and size, the relevant Arab regimes do not seem to be adventure-prone, and it is difficult (though not impossible) to imagine Mubarak joining Assad in a war against Israel in the foreseeable future. But the Middle East still has its crazies for whom Western criteria of reasonable risk do not exist, and who can start a conflagration others may not be able to contain. How thin is the margin between a manageable state of affairs in the Middle East and chaos? As the attempted assassination of Mubarak in June brought home, it is the thickness of one well-aimed bullet.

And even if the extremist forces are quelled, harmony is hardly likely to prevail. Western ideas of democracy and the peaceful settlement of differences are a long way from penetrating the Arabic and Muslim world. Until they do, even the most moderate regimes will dream of Israel's disappearance, and consider peace treaties with the Jewish state temporary and tactical agreements to be broken at will. Egypt is no exception.

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# Philip Johnson's Brilliant Career

*Hilton Kramer*

His wit all see-saw, between that and this,
Now high, now low, now master up, now miss.
And he himself one vile antithesis.

—Alexander Pope
"Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot"

THERE are certain figures in the arts who, although minor in accomplishment and equivocal in their aesthetic influence, are so completely representative of the spirit of their age that they come to occupy a historical position far greater than the intrinsic merits of their work could ever justify. Their function in cultural life is not so much to create as to incite and impersonate.

Such figures tend therefore to commence their careers as epigones of talents more radical than their own. Often they are drawn to extreme positions that promise deliverance from the conventionality of their origins, but they are not equipped by sensibility or conviction to distinguish between the appearance and the reality of the idols and ideals they choose to emulate. When they feel called upon at opportune moments to attempt originality or innovation—as they inevitably do—they lapse into parody and pastiche, sometimes deliberately, sometimes not.

The métier of such figures is not, in any case, either ideas or artistic creation. It is publicity, showmanship, and the exercise of power. Once they have captured the limelight, they become addicted to it, for the withdrawal of attention is tantamount to oblivion. Their careers thus become a succession of feints and assaults designed to command the public stage and add luster to their visibility—even at the price of obloquy and scandal. In our time this usually means pleasing important people while pretending to offend established taste.

THE American architect Philip Johnson is a particularly vexing example of this type. For more than 60 years—he was born in 1906—he has been a formidable presence on the American cultural scene. No other figure of his time—no other architect, certainly—has so successfully combined so many roles in the arts and their institutions. In addition to his work as an architect and architectural publicist, Johnson has been an eminent museum curator (at the Museum of Modern Art), an influential university professor (at Yale), a leading collector and promoter of contemporary art, and a tastemaker and reputation-broker on a huge scale. He has also been an immensely successful businessman, and equally successful, too, as an adviser and mentor to people who are even richer and more powerful than he.

Yet Johnson's career, though undeniably brilliant, encompasses no single accomplishment that can be cited as a quintessential example of his ideas or his vision. In lieu of a personal aesthetic or a recognizable style or a definitive philosophy—or even, alas, a coherent development—what characterizes his work is a series of brilliantly performed charades in which other people's ideas, other people's tastes, and other people's styles have been appropriated, exploited, deconstructed, and repackaged to advance the prosperity of his own reputation and influence.

One consequence of that influence and the enormous power of patronage and preferment that it commands has been a notable reluctance among architectural critics and others to undertake the kind of frank and comprehensive assessment that is normally devoted to the work of famous figures on the cultural scene. Compared, for example, with the attacks that have been mounted in recent years on the accomplishments of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art who launched Johnson's career as an architectural expert and art collector, or on the work of Mies van der Rohe, whose ideas exerted the single greatest influence on Johnson's early architectural thought, Johnson himself has remained remarkably exempt from searching criticism. It is indeed a measure of Johnson's power that despite the many really bad buildings he has created over the last 30 years or more, and the many ideological hostages to fortune he has given his enemies over the course of his career, he remains in nearly total control of his own reputation. Although he is widely recognized as the bad boy of contemporary architec-

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ture—he once proudly proclaimed himself to be an architectural "whore"—an aura of artistic distinction and superior taste has nonetheless insulated Johnson from serious attack.

How is one to explain this odd situation? It is certainly not a question of his being a beloved figure; he is not. No doubt, fear of reprisal accounts for a good deal of the reluctance to challenge the basis of Johnson's artistic celebrity, but there are other reasons, too. One of them is that he has played an important role in launching the careers of many of those who would now be in a position to write the requisite critiques of his work, and who may well be hesitant to seem lacking in gratitude. Another is that Johnson has proved to be very adept at anticipating such critiques in his own frequent utterances about his work, making effective use of a combination of campy self-mockery and swaggering self-aggrandizement as a means of trivializing the case against him before others have had the opportunity to state it more cogently.

But a more fundamental reason than any of these has been the sweeping destruction of architectural standards which Johnson himself—both as an architect and as an architectural thinker—has made fashionable both within the profession and in the public perception of current architectural practice. This destruction of standards has advanced for a couple of decades now under the rubric of "postmodernism," which is less a movement than a collective agreement to reduce architecture to the level of kitsch and elevate kitsch to the status of art.

Johnson did not himself create the postmodernist phenomenon—creation, even of this sort, has never been his forte—but he was quick to identify himself with its fortunes and soon became its most prestigious representative. What made the move especially piquant for a sensibility as perverse as Johnson's was the contradiction it embraced. For in the first phase—the Miesian phase—of his architectural career, Johnson was an ardent champion of the very modernism which the postmodernists were busily maligning. But it is entirely characteristic of Johnson that the second half of his career should have been devoted to destroying the standards that served as a touchstone of quality in the first. Infidelity has long been a distinguishing feature of Johnson's character, and in this respect the promiscuous shifts of attachment and betrayal in his artistic tastes are an accurate reflection of the way he has lived his life in both the private and public realms.

OWING to the checkered character of that life, it was not to be expected that Johnson would ever authorize a frank, full-scale biography. Indeed, the original agreement that obtained between him and Franz Schulze, the author of *Philip Johnson: Life and Work*,* stipulated that the book would not be published in its subject's lifetime. It was on this assumption that Johnson enthusiastically cooperated in the preparation of the book and encouraged intimate friends and professional associates to do likewise. Yet as the book approached completion and Johnson, despite the frailties of age, continued to command the limelight, he changed his mind about delaying publication. His appetite for publicity undiminished, Johnson gave Schulze the go-ahead, thereby assuring himself of what was likely to be his last sensational fling in the public eye.

Always a shrewd connoisseur of the *Zeitgeist*, Johnson understood very well that in the debased cultural climate of the 1990's, even the most scandalous revelations in Schulze's biography would not only have lost their power to cause him public embarrassment but would, on the contrary, contribute to the glamor of an invincibly chic reputation. And in this hard-headed assessment Johnson has been proved largely correct. For what emerges from Schulze's biography is, among much else, a portrait of the architect as an immoralist—precisely the kind of immoralist in whose mind a deep-rooted aestheticism combines with a remorseless nihilism to render everything but personal gratification and public approbation utterly meaningless. And that, rather than the admired or despised architect, is the figure who is now being celebrated as he approaches his ninetieth birthday.

PHILIP JOHNSON was born to wealth, privilege, and propriety in Cleveland, Ohio, the son of a successful, Harvard-educated lawyer and a reclusive, Wellesley-educated mother whose primary interests, according to Schulze, were "good manners and lofty ideas appropriate to her concept of [the Johnson family's] station and mission in life"—"a mother of majesty rather than intimacy." After the death of his older brother when Philip was two years old, he was subjected to what Schulze describes as "an uncommonly protected upbringing." Neither of his parents was young. When they married in 1901, his father was thirty-nine and already twice widowed; his mother, then thirty-two, had been, in keeping with the conventions of the day, well on her way to spinsterhood. Philip and his sister Theodate, the only member of the family to whom he was ever close, later believed their mother had had a lesbian attachment before her marriage—but this was pure speculation and may have been, on Philip's part at least, a self-justifying belief.

Homer Johnson was remarkably generous to all of his children, and in the case of his single surviving son he lavished so much wealth upon him that by the time Philip graduated from Harvard he was richer than his father. Still, the father seems never to have known what to make

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of his brilliant, troubled son, and was fairly obtuse about what he could not avoid knowing. When, for example, he discovered that Philip, while at Harvard, had consulted a Boston neurologist about his homosexuality, he simply declared that "Boys don't fall in love with boys" and advised his son to forget about it. Many years after Homer Johnson died, in his ninety-eighth year, the son's judgment on him was characteristically cold and dismissive: "He wasn't any use in the world."

His mother, however, was more interested in things of the mind, and although no more adept than her husband at understanding their son, she exerted a far greater influence on his development. "Since she understood more of the mind than of the heart," Schulze writes, "she looked upon Philip's special place in the family as an excuse, indeed an inspiration, to design his intellect first and worry over his psyche later, if at all." It was a recipe for disaster, and the disasters promptly manifested themselves in the form of violent tantrums, abysmal loneliness, and mental breakdown.

Yet however much he may have disliked his mother, she remained Johnson's principal intellectual confidante until well after his student years. "Their mutuality endured," Schulze writes, "and she became his favorite correspondent throughout his school years away from home and his early professional life." At Harvard one of his major concentrations was in Greek, which his mother had taught him as a boy, and her notion of the Johnson family's "station" in life, which placed them well beyond the mundane standards of ordinary folk, was one that the adult Johnson adopted as a personal credo.

This sense of a special station was greatly abetted by Johnson's enthusiastic discovery of Nietzsche while he was studying philosophy—his other academic interest—at Harvard. According to Schulze, it was Nietzsche who turned Johnson in the direction of art and politics, and whose ideas can be seen in retrospect to have shaped the immoralist impulses that governed the rest of his life and work.

During most of his undergraduate career at Harvard (protracted to seven years because of episodes of mental breakdown), Johnson seems not to have been much interested in either art or architecture, and indeed he had no very specific notion of what he wanted to do. Except for study at Harvard and travel abroad, his life remained closely tethered to that of his family. (On one of his trips he took to wearing Arab dress and enjoyed what Schulze describes as "his first full-fledged, 'consummated' sexual experience" with a guard in the Cairo Museum.) The fortune that Johnson's father had already settled upon him did not make the choice of a vocation a pressing one, and his father's predictable suggestion that he study law was easily rejected. So was the offer to teach Greek at Oberlin, where his father was a trustee.

WHAT chanced to give Johnson his first sense of a commanding purpose to which he could harness his considerable intellectual energies was a meeting in 1929 with the twenty-seven-year-old Alfred Barr, who later that year would be named director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Barr had given a series of five widely-noticed lectures at Wellesley on the entire history of modernism, from Post-Impressionism to the Bauhaus and Russian Constructivism, and he was on the lookout for recruits to the cause. Johnson had only lately acquired a curiosity about modernist buildings in Europe, but at their first encounter at Wellesley, where Johnson's sister was a student, Barr appears to have converted him on the spot. Schulze helpfully illuminates the psychological process at work. Johnson, he writes,

> had a habit of seeking out authority figures ... who, as if reenacting [his mother's] role in his younger life, could take command of his emotional loyalties at the same time they nurtured his intellectual ambitions—could dominate him, that is, as they aggrandized him.

As discussions for the new museum in New York were already in progress, Barr apparently hinted that there might be a place for Johnson on its staff, and gave his eager recruit detailed instructions on what he should see on the European trip he was planning for the summer of 1929. Thus began Johnson's initiation into the modernist movement that was to dominate the whole first phase of his professional career.

While Johnson was abroad that summer, the announcement of Barr's appointment was duly made. Johnson could not immediately join the museum staff, however, because he had not yet completed the course requirements for his Harvard degree. This he did in the spring of 1930, meanwhile commuting to New York where he quickly became a member of Barr's inner circle. By that time he had also teamed up with the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., and together they planned a book that in 1932 was published under the title, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*. This, as Schulze correctly observes, "went on to exert a tremendous impact on architecture worldwide."

Johnson was distinctly the junior partner in this collaboration, but it nonetheless established him as an authority on a subject that, three years earlier, he had barely been acquainted with. Even more important to his new career was the show, "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition," which he organized at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932. This was a major event in the campaign to establish modernist architecture on the American scene, and it launched Johnson as a tastemaker in a field which was still highly controversial and in which he was himself still something of an amateur, neither a trained scholar nor a professional practitioner. He proved, how-

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ever, to be a great showman, and this was an immense advantage in the new museology which Barr introduced to the public with the Museum of Modern Art—a museology in which installation, presentation, and propaganda were to be as important in shaping public response as the objects on display.

JOHNSON was clearly one of the rising stars in the constellation of talents that Barr was counting on to run the museum in the first decade of its activities. In Barr and his wife Marga, moreover, Johnson found a friendship unlike any he had ever known. They were more than mentors to him; they were "family"—the kind of cosmopolitan, uncensorious family Johnson preferred to his own. In Marga Barr, especially, he found a worldly confidante with whom he could frankly discuss anything, including the vagaries of his now very active sex life. Although more or less contemporaries—Barr was one year older than Johnson—Johnson became, in effect, the Barrs' adopted "son." They traveled together, they rented Manhattan apartments in the same building, and they were closely bound to the same mission—the museum and the modernism it espoused. Or so it seemed, anyway, to the Barrs and their circle.

Yet the museum, as it turned out, did not really satisfy Johnson's inchoate and unappeased Nietzschean ambitions for himself and the world. To fulfill those ambitions, art was deemed to be insufficient. Only politics would do—and politics, as it happened, of a particularly loathsome character.

The turning point came in 1933 with Adolf Hitler's assumption of power in Germany. Johnson adored Germany. He was fluent in the German language, and well-versed in the avant-garde cultural life that marked the last years of the Weimar Republic. He had taken full advantage, too, of the sexual opportunities it offered to a man of his tastes. That Hitler was the sworn enemy of everything Johnson seemed most to admire in Weimar Germany hardly seemed to matter. There is no other way to put it: Johnson fell in love with the Nazi regime.

The Barrs, who were in Germany when Hitler came to power, were horrified. When they met with Johnson in Europe shortly thereafter, their disagreement was total and intense.

> Alfred deplored the takeover [Schulze writes]; Philip was exhilarated by it. Alfred foresaw a brutal repression of freedoms in all walks of German life, leading to an atrophy of national culture as a whole. Philip, remembering the Potsdam rally at which he found himself transfixed by the Nazi spectacle and transported by the charisma of Hitler, saw a "*nationale Erhebung*" (national resurgence), an amazing restoration of confidence among the German people, who only shortly before had seemed defeated by the Depression.

For Johnson, as Schulze shrewdly observes, "Hitler and the Nazis had color. . . . There was dash to these Nazis: the way they dressed and sang and marched and fought; their impudence, their bravado, the sexuality Philip could not help but project on them." And the Nazis also met the requisite Nietzschean standard. "He concentrated his attention on the Nietzschean text in *Der Wille zur Macht* and its thesis that 'the will to power' constitutes man's fundamental motivating force"—a doctrine, as Schulze also points out, that "must have appealed to the elitist view in which Philip had been nurtured since birth."

In the face of these attractions, which were as much aesthetic and erotic as they were political, the arts were no longer a top priority for Johnson. "If in the arts [Germany] sets the clock back now, it will run all the faster in the future," he wrote at the time. Even the Bauhaus, which Johnson had acclaimed four years earlier as a new architectural ideal, he now condemned for bearing "irretrievably the stamp of Communism and Marxism." As for Hitler's racial doctrines, Johnson never allowed them to interfere with his sex life. In that respect, at least, he remained a follower of the Weimar ethos rather than the Nazi. Thus, writes Schulze, "he took his first serious lover [in New York] in 1934"—at the very moment when he was committing himself to the fascist cause, to which racial theories were central. "Jimmy Daniels was a black café singer whom Philip later called the first Mrs. Johnson."

STILL, as a consequence of Johnson's political conversion, when he returned to New York from Germany he resigned his post at the Museum of Modern Art to devote himself to politics. Then he did something really bizarre for a white homosexual with a black male lover. With a school friend who was working at the museum, Johnson attempted to join up with the Southern political machine led by the demagogic governor of Louisiana, Huey Long.

It was a move widely reported in the New York press at the time. The headline of a story written by Joseph Alsop in the *Herald-Tribune* read: "Two Quit Modern Art Museum for Sur-Realist Political Venture." The *New York Times* reported of Johnson and his colleague that "Recently they became convinced that, after all, abstract art left some major political and economic problems unsolved. Consequently both have turned in their resignations [from the Museum of Modern Art] and will leave as soon as practicable for Louisiana to study the methods of Huey Long." Once again Alfred Barr was horrified, tried to change Johnson's mind, and failed.

Needless to say, Huey Long was not interested in Johnson's services. But Johnson's next attempt to attach himself to a homegrown version of a Nazi-type movement met with a more enthusiastic response. He discovered the Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, the Roman Catholic priest whose

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Sunday afternoon radio broadcasts from the Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, Michigan, commanded an audience of 30 million listeners. By February 1936, Johnson was in direct contact with Coughlin, and though he found the man himself a "crashing bore," he nonetheless enlisted in his political cause, which at that moment aimed to challenge President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1936 election. Johnson went to work for Coughlin's weekly paper, *Social Justice*, and was much involved in the single biggest rally of the priest's political campaign. Schulze writes:

> At Riverview Park [in Chicago], an enormous amusement complex on the city's North Side, a throng estimated by the *Chicago Tribune* at between 80,000 and 100,000 heard Coughlin speak from a huge platform that Philip had taken special pains to design. It was modeled after the one he had seen used so effectively at the 1932 Nazi rally: "A special stand, bordering on the moderne," the *Tribune* reported, "had been created at one end of the field. It provided a glaring white background 50-feet wide and 20-feet high for the solitary figure of the priest."

Even though the campaign of Coughlin's Union party flopped, Johnson labored on, attempting to stimulate some kind of political youth movement along the same lines. That, too, flopped.

It was in the aftermath of the Coughlin debacle that Johnson returned to Germany. The highlight of his 1938 journey was the Nazi *Parteitag* in Nuremberg, marking the fifth year of Hitler's ascension to power. Johnson characteristically described the Nuremberg rally as "even more staggering" than Wagner's *Ring*. He remained unbothered, moreover, by the fact that Hitler had officially declared war on *Entartete Kunst*—"degenerate art" of precisely the kind he had so recently championed as a member of Alfred Barr's inner circle at the Museum of Modern Art. As Schulze observes, "the romance of the thing overpowered him."

When he returned to New York in the winter of 1938-39, Johnson tried to buy the *American Mercury*, the monthly magazine founded by H.L. Mencken, complaining that "the Jews" had ruined it, and when that, too, fell through, he traveled once again to Europe—this time venturing as far as Poland. "The Polish tour," writes Schulze, "only reinforced Philip's preconceptions of the backwardness among the Poles and the Jews, while reminding him of the superiority of German society and the German military force." When the war started with Hitler's invasion of Poland, he therefore headed straight for Berlin in order "to prepare for the most exciting episode of his summer: the German Propaganda Ministry had formally invited him to follow the Wehrmacht to the front."

He owed this opportunity to Father Coughlin's *Social Justice*, for which he wrote five articles in the summer and fall of 1939, condemning England, praising the Germans, and dismissing the United States as "the best misinformed nation in the world." From Johnson's FBI file, which the Bureau began assembling during the war, Schulze has retrieved a letter, believed to have been written to a friend in December 1939 when Johnson was back in the U.S. This is the key passage:

> I was lucky enough to get to be a correspondent so that I could go to the front when I wanted to and so it was that I came again to the country that we had motored through, the towns north of Warsaw. . . . The German green uniforms made the place look gay and happy. There were not many Jews to be seen. We saw Warsaw burn and Modlin being bombed. It was a stirring spectacle.

This is almost too much even for Schulze's studied detachment. While he makes a feeble attempt at a psychological analysis of Johnson's behavior—based on some ill-digested ideas out of William James—he is clearly both appalled and bewildered by his own account of this crucial period in Johnson's life, which is the most complete we have been given so far.

In 1939, Philip Johnson's romance with Hitler and the Nazis had begun to attract the interest of a journalist named Dale Kramer—no relation to the present writer—who in the October 1940 issue of *Harper's* gave an account of Johnson's political affiliations in an article on "The American Fascists." The magazine was on the newsstands in September when, according to Johnson's FBI file, he had arranged a meeting at the German embassy in Washington. It may have been pure coincidence, but, writes Schulze, "three days after the alleged appointment at the embassy in Washington Philip was back in Harvard, enrolled as a student in the school of architecture." His affair with Nazism was over.

On his return to Harvard, Johnson, at age thirty-three, was no ordinary student. He was older, richer, and more knowledgeable than other students. Moreover, in the decade since he had received his undergraduate degree, the university—or its Graduate School of Design, anyway—had abandoned its traditional curriculum to embrace the modernism which Johnson had championed in the early 1930's. The book which Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock had published in 1932, *The International Style*, was now a required text.

This gave him an immense advantage, to say the least. And so did his wealth, which enabled him to design and build for himself a Miesian house in Cambridge while he was still enrolled as a student. To be sure, Johnson could not entirely escape the consequences of his political past, but in the end his fascist involvements proved to be more of a temporary inconvenience and occasional embarrassment than a permanent bar to advancement. This was all the more remark-

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able in that the new Harvard design faculty was dominated by three refugees from Nazi Germany—Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus; his Bauhaus colleague Marcel Breuer; and Martin Wagner, the former director of planning for the city of Berlin. But the bad blood that existed between Gropius and Johnson, for example, had much more to do with the latter's loyalty to Mies van der Rohe than with the former's love affair with the Nazis. (Years later, when he was in a position to do so with impunity, Johnson dismissively characterized Gropius as "the Warren G. Harding of architecture.") Breuer, on the other hand, treated Johnson with cordiality and respect.

Meanwhile, Johnson was making some pro-forma attempts at his own political rehabilitation. When he joined a Harvard Defense Group (a civil-defense organization) in 1941, it fell to the young Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. to dismiss him from the organization on political grounds. An attempt to take a wartime job at the Office of Facts and Figures in Washington likewise failed as soon as the agency got a look at his FBI file. Still, Johnson weathered these and other travails—including a brief stint in the U.S. Army, into which he was drafted in 1943—with remarkable ease, given the strong anti-Nazi sentiments at the time.

When he got out of the army in 1945, with the country still waging war against Japan, he promptly set about mapping the course of his new career. Toward this end, he opened his own architectural office in Manhattan (though he was unlicensed to practice in New York State); and, with the help of Alfred Barr, he insinuated himself into his old position in the architectural department of the Museum of Modern Art. The renewed MOMA connection proved indispensable to his new career as a practicing architect, restoring Johnson to a position of authority in the field even before he had built enough to earn it.

Then, as always, Johnson was not a man—or artist—to allow principle to interfere with opportunity. He straightaway designed a prefabricated house for a *Ladies' Home Journal* competition, and arranged for the house to be exhibited at the Modern. "Remarkably," writes Schulze, "it was a deep bow to the functionalism Philip had so long abhorred." Even his renewed campaign on behalf of Mies concealed a growing private doubt about the value of the Miesian aesthetic—which did not prevent Johnson from mounting an exhibition devoted to Mies at the Modern or from designing for himself the famous Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut, a house that is itself little more than a pastiche of the Miesian style.

That house promptly proved to be so egregiously uninhabitable even for an aesthete like Johnson that he at once undertook to build an alternative, *anti*-Miesian retreat on the same property that would afford him the privacy and amenity which the doctrinaire transparency of the Glass House precluded. In this regard, I recall a lecture Johnson delivered at Harvard in the spring of 1951 (when I was a student there). Asked by a member of the audience if the Glass House was not fundamentally incompatible with the needs of family life, Johnson declared with his customary hauteur that the family should be abolished.

For Johnson, the Glass House of 1949 served a purpose far more important than domestic amenity. More than anything else he had done or would ever do, it established Philip Johnson the architect as a reputed master of the same modernist style upon which Philip Johnson the museum curator and author had conferred a renewed legitimacy and glamor. Whatever his doubts about the failings of the Miesian ideal, and despite the inevitable jokes about "Mies van der Johnson," the Glass House was a brilliant gambit that completely succeeded in its purpose. To this day, it continues to be regarded as a classic of American modernist architecture, despite the fact that architects as eminent and as different as Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies himself dismissed it with contempt.

THE payoffs came right on schedule. In 1950, Johnson was commissioned to design the MOMA annex on West 53rd Street—another exercise in Miesian pastiche—and in 1953 the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. (It was the elder Mrs. Rockefeller who, when told something of Johnson's Nazi connections, reportedly said that "every young man should be allowed to make one large mistake." But it is doubtful that Mrs. Rockefeller ever knew the full extent of Johnson's involvement.) The sculpture garden may be the single most beautiful thing Johnson ever designed, but it is an essay in museum installation, not building design, and serves a strictly aesthetic function. In any case, these MOMA commissions set the stage from which Johnson's subsequent architectural career was launched.

Not everyone could be expected to be as forgiving as Mrs. Rockefeller, however. The experience of World War II and the impact of the Holocaust remained powerful moral and emotional issues, especially in the intellectual, cultural, and business worlds of New York. This obliged Johnson to ponder, as Schulze writes, "the need . . . to be free of public perception of his kind of political taint." Success, in other words, required some public gesture of atonement if the stain of anti-Semitism were to be effectively neutralized.

When, therefore, Johnson learned that a Jewish congregation in the suburb of Port Chester, New York, was looking for an architect to design a new synagogue, he seized the opportunity with his characteristic bravado. "His proposal to design [the building] without fee," writes Schulze, "was hard for the potential clients to resist, coming as it did from an architect, and a New Canaan neighbor, whose professional reputation was

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growing at about the same rate his political past seemed to be receding in most people's minds." The building that Johnson designed was an architectural hodgepodge devoid of aesthetic distinction, but for the architect it served its purpose well enough. It was another brilliantly cynical move, and there was no way for his clients to know that the sculpture he selected for the interior—an abstract metal relief by Ibram Lassaw—was virtually identical with the one that already adorned his secluded New Canaan bedroom, the scene of rituals of a very different sort. Whether or not Johnson intended this as a private joke cannot be known; but it is not the kind of aesthetic irony that would have been lost on him.

It is worth reflecting, in this connection, upon the remarkably large number of prominent Jews who, in the course of Johnson's architectural career, have made major contributions to his reputation and success. Conspicuous on this roster of art patrons, intellectuals, businessmen, museum trustees, critics, and architects are such luminaries as Lincoln Kirstein, Edward M.M. Warburg, Ronald Lauder, Samuel Bronfman, I.S. Brochstein, Rosamond Bernier, Ada Louise Huxtable, Paul Goldberger, Robert A.M. Stern, and Peter Eisenman. To them should also be added Shimon Peres, who in 1960 arranged for Johnson to design the nuclear reactor at Rehovot in Israel, and Meyer Lansky—"one of the panjandrums of organized crime in America," as Schulze writes—for whom Johnson was planning to design a huge gambling-casino hotel in Havana when Fidel Castro's revolution altered their respective schedules.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it is sufficient to underline the extraordinary success Johnson achieved in his programmatic effort to induce a kind of collective amnesia or suspension of curiosity about his Nazi past, even among people who had every reason to be alert to such matters. It was not until 1988, when Johnson was eighty-two and, as Schulze says, "probably the most famous figure in the American architectural world," that the critic Michael Sorkin attempted to awaken a new generation with a scathing article in *Spy* magazine. But the venue of Sorkin's attack was itself too disreputable for the article to have much of an impact. At the altitude of eminence which Johnson now occupied, with the press in his pocket, the *beau monde* at his feet, and the profession lavishing hosannas upon him, he was for all practical purposes beyond the reach of criticism or exposure.

WHAT in retrospect is especially remarkable about these adroit historical maneuvers is that the man who effected them remained at best a very mediocre architect and at times a disgracefully bad one. The art museums he designed for Lincoln, Nebraska; Utica, New York; and both Corpus Christi and Fort Worth, Texas are among the worst such buildings erected in this country in his lifetime—and all the less to be forgiven as coming from a connoisseur canonized by the Museum of Modern Art. None of these buildings is in the same league with a contemporary masterpiece like Louis Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth or the building Edward Larrabee Barnes designed for the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The New York State Theater, which Johnson designed for New York City Ballet at Lincoln Center, is so undistinguished that many people find it hard to believe it was done by a reputable architect at all; it looks like pure developer's boilerplate.

These failed buildings, moreover, date from before the time when Johnson developed a conscious policy of socking it to his corporate clients with aggressive displays of imperious bad taste—before, that is, he perpetrated postmodern monstrosities like the AT & T Building and the so-called "Lipstick" tower in New York. For some two decades now, Johnson has been functioning—with what degree of deliberateness, one can only surmise—as the Andy Warhol of American architecture, "quoting" a bit of Gothic here, a bit of Chippendale there, and sporting a display of self-aggrandizing kitsch everywhere, in more or less the same manner in which Warhol famously "quoted" the Campbell Soup label.

Some of this has proved to be too much even for Johnson's most loyal admirers. The critic Ada Louise Huxtable spoke for many when, in an address to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1980, she condemned buildings like AT & T and the Pittsburgh Plate Glass headquarters in Pittsburgh as "shallow, cerebral design," "bad pieces of architecture," and "clever cannibalism." But the most devastating judgment came in 1976 from an even more surprising quarter, the Museum of Modern Art, which rejected Johnson's bid to design the most ambitious expansion in its history. Johnson had been, in effect, MOMA's house architect for a quarter-century, and its principal architectural authority for longer than that; he was now passed over for the commission that would give the museum its architectural identity for many decades to come. (The job went to Cesar Pelli.)

It was tantamount to a divorce, and Johnson suffered what may have been the single biggest disappointment of his career. "Hence his reaction," Schulze writes, "which was to reverse the intentions he had earlier had for the disposal of his estate and not to leave the museum his collection of painting and sculpture or even his country property in New Canaan." Still, even this has not quite ended Johnson's association with the museum, for MOMA is planning to mark his ninetieth birthday in 1996 with a publication and exhibition devoted to the paintings, sculptures, and design objects he has already given the museum since its founding.

What audacities Johnson may be preparing for that occasion is anyone's guess, but it is a mercy that neither Alfred nor Marga Barr will be around

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to witness them. On the last pages of *Philip Johnson: Life and Work*, Schulze brings us up to date on his subject's current views with an account of an address Johnson delivered last year (1994) at the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna:

> The subject was Stalinist architecture, and Philip used the occasion not only to demonstrate again that his basic view of the world was as consistent as the styles of his architecture were not, but to affirm an opinion he had seldom had the opportunity to express: his admiration for a boulevard in the former East Berlin that had been the object of almost unanimous scorn among Western critics. It was the notorious Stalinallee, later renamed the Karl-Marx-Allee, still later, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Frankfurter Allee. Philip had long found a grandeur in it that others had dismissed as totalitarian pomposity. Now he called it "the new Champs-Élysees," a product of "romantic daring" and "the dream of the East for monumentality."

Schulze may well be correct in his observation that "At eighty-eight, [Johnson] was where he was always most comfortable, at the head of the parade of contemporary taste." But given his history, there are other ways of reading his remarks in Vienna. Coming upon them in his biography, I was reminded of a conversation I had with Marga Barr in the last year of her life. I was then working with her on the preparation of a "Chronicle" of Alfred Barr's career for publication in the *New Criterion*. (It was published under the title, "Our Campaigns," in a special issue of the magazine in the summer of 1987.)

On one of the mornings we had set for a meeting in her apartment, the *New York Times* published Johnson's proposed designs for the rehabilitation of the Times Square-42nd Street area. I found them even more wretched than some of the awful things he had already built, and I was eager to know what Marga thought of them. In recounting to me the story of Alfred's career, she had had frequent occasion to speak of Johnson, and she always did so with fond affection—for the record, so to speak. That morning I asked if she had seen the paper, and she rather glumly acknowledged that she had. I then asked what she thought of the kind of buildings Johnson had lately been designing—and hastened to add that she was under no obligation to discuss the subject if she preferred not to.

In responding to difficult questions, Marga had a way of turning away for a few moments while she composed her thoughts and then facing her interlocutor with a very determined look. This is what she did that morning as she said to me: "I feel about Philip today the way I would feel about a beloved son who had gone into a life of crime."

It was a hard thing for her to say, but Marga Barr was not in the habit of shirking the truth. After reading Franz Schulze's life of Philip Johnson, I would say that she had gotten the matter exactly right.

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# Academic Advocates

*Gertrude Himmelfarb*

RECENT discussions of academic freedom have focused on one particularly egregious case of professorial racism and anti-Semitism. In class and in public lectures, Professor Leonard Jeffries, then the chairman of the black-studies program at the City College of New York, expounded his theories of the genetic supremacy of blacks and of the responsibility of Jews for the slave trade. In 1992 City College removed him from the chairmanship, but he was reinstated after a federal court found that the school had violated his right to free speech. This April that court decision was reversed, and Jeffries has now stepped down as chairman, though he continues to be a tenured professor.

The academic and legal communities, to say nothing of civil-rights organizations, have tied themselves in knots trying to sort out the issues raised by the Jeffries case. Would there have been a problem if the professor had preached his doctrines only outside the university and not within? Or in the university (in a meeting of a black-student organization, for example) but not in the classroom? Or in the classroom while permitting other views to be heard and assuring students they would not be penalized for expressing such views? Or in a private rather than a public university?

Or—and this is the more fundamental issue — what was the ground for moving against Jeffries in the first place? Was it the political nature of his ideas, threatening the civility of discourse that is supposed to prevail in the university, and (in the language of sexual-harassment cases) creating a "hostile environment" for whites and Jews, thus jeopardizing their civil rights? Or was it the untruth of his ideas—their unscientific, nonhistorical character?

The last question is the most vexatious. For it raises the familiar argument: who is to say what is true and untrue? A professor cites his authorities; so do his opponents. If those authorities conflict, is that not the nature of all scholarly inquiry? Is it not the basic assumption of academic freedom—indeed, of freedom in general—that truth emerges only from the conflict of ideas? Surely this is the great lesson we all learned from John Stuart Mill: that truth depends on the "collision of adverse opinions," that an undisputed truth is "a dead dogma, not a living truth," and that adverse opinions are so essential to truth that they should be artificially contrived, if necessary, by "the most skillful devil's advocate."

"DEVIL'S ADVOCATE"—that describes the role of all too many of our professors today. The Jeffries case is only the tip of the iceberg. Precisely because it deals with such sensitive issues as racism and anti-Semitism, it obscures a larger problem that bedevils the university: the problem of advocacy in general. Not just the advocacy of patently and outrageously offensive doctrines; rather, the advocacy of any views that a professor might hold on any subject.

In most universities, professors have become accustomed to expressing their opinions freely on all sorts of matters about which they may or may not have any professional competence. They do so as uninhibitedly in classrooms and lecture halls as in the media and public forums. Moreover, not only do they feel free to express their opinions; they feel free to promote causes, interests, and organized activities of every kind. At issue is not the professor who, in a class on Shakespeare, presents his own interpretation of *Hamlet*; it is the professor who, in a class on Shakespeare, presents his own view of homosexuality and gay rights, or who so distorts *Hamlet* as to make it seem a tract about homosexuality and gay rights.

The professor as advocate. Is this what academic freedom is about? Originally intended to protect professors in their scholarly pursuit of truth within the university, while ensuring their political rights as citizens outside the university, the doctrine is now invoked to allow professors to express their political views in the classroom, without regard for either scholarship or truth. Although this is not the first time that advocacy

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in this sense has reared its head in the university, it is the first time it has done so with the approval of so many professors in so many disciplines—and not in the name of truth but in a show of disrespect for the very idea of truth.

Even Marxists in their heyday were not so dismissive of truth. They were, to be sure, contemptuous of those "bourgeois truths" that parade under the names of freedom, justice, law, and culture. These were said to represent the "social consciousness" of the ruling class, the "superstructure" that gives a specious legitimacy to capitalist property, production, and social relations. But Communism, Marx had explained, would bring with it not another such superstructure but truth itself, because Communism, being the "real movement" of history, could be depicted by a "real, positive science." It was in the name of that "science"—in other words, of truth—that Marxist professors assumed the mantle of advocacy, determined not merely to "interpret" the world but to "change" it.

Today a good many professors accept the Marxist indictment of bourgeois society and culture while rejecting any notion of a "real, positive science" or any other kind of truth. In the now-familiar race/class/gender trinity that has replaced Marx's monolithic class doctrine, there is no room for transcendent truth or knowledge.

For a while, in the new multicultural order, it was possible to envision a flourishing of scholarship inspired by the different perspectives of newly "empowered" groups. Black historians, feminist historians, ethnic historians, gay and lesbian historians would pursue their own interests in the traditional way, as scholars rather than advocates. But as each group has tried to overcome its own "marginality" by "mainstreaming" itself into the center of the curriculum, the competing, often conflicting, pressures and passions have made advocates of all but the most resolute scholars.

RECENTLY another movement has emerged to give credibility to the practice of advocacy. This is postmodernism, which has swept through the academic disciplines—literature most conspicuously, but also history, philosophy, anthropology, the law. Postmodernism is the most influential, and perhaps the most enduring, of all the fashions that have afflicted the university in recent times. This is not to say that all professors have become postmodernists. But the basic tenets of the creed have pervaded the academy to the point where most young professors, and a good many older ones, accept them almost unthinkingly.

The animating spirit of postmodernism is a radical skepticism and relativism that rejects any idea of truth, knowledge, reason, or objectivity. More important, it refuses even to aspire to such ideas, on the ground that they are not only unattainable but undesirable—that they are, by their very nature, authoritarian and repressive.

This is very different from the skepticism and relativism that scholars have always brought to their trade. Historians, most notably, have always had a healthy dose of both. They have been acutely aware of the limitations of their discipline: the deficiency of the historical record, the selectivity inherent in the writing of history, the fallibility and subjectivity of the historian, and thus the imperfect, tentative, and partial (in both senses of the word) nature of every historical work.

But professional historians have always made the most strenuous efforts to curb and control these deficiencies. This is what is meant by the "discipline" of history, and why until recently the keystone of every graduate program has been a required course on "methodology," instructing students in the proper use of sources, the need for substantiating and countervailing evidence, the conventions of documentation and citation.

Today, such courses are very nearly obsolete, and the very idea of a discipline of history is regarded as disingenuous or hypocritical. Similarly, the idea of fact (the word now appears almost invariably in quotation marks) is derided, as are the ideas of truth, objectivity, and reality. What passes as history, like all forms of knowledge, is presumed to be a "construct" of the "hegemonic" class. There is no truth to be derived from history—not even partial, incremental, contingent truths. There is no objectivity—not even an approximation of it or any reason to strive toward it. There are not even any events—only "texts" to be interpreted in accord with the historian's interest and disposition, just as the text of a poem may be an occasion for the free-floating imagination of the literary critic.

It is in this spirit that all the humanities have been relativized, subjectified, "problematized" (as the deconstructionists say)—and thus politicized. For if there is no reality, no truth, no facts, no objectivity, then there are only will and power. "Everything is political," the popular slogan has it. Every professor—indeed, every student—is presumed to be, consciously or not, an advocate.

This is the intellectual rationale that lies behind the practice of advocacy. Not all advocates are postmodernists, but those who pride themselves on being "engaged" can take comfort in a learned and sophisticated theory, couched in an appropriately arcane language, that makes advocacy intellectually reputable and morally commendable.

CERTAINLY this is the view that emerged in Pittsburgh this June at a conference on advocacy organized by the Modern Language Association (MLA) and sponsored by fifteen leading professional associations. The over-

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whelming consensus of the participants (I was among the few dissenters) was that advocacy in the classroom is not only proper; it is natural and inevitable. Professors, the argument went, obviously have opinions on all sorts of subjects. Is it not better for them to express those opinions openly rather than surreptitiously? Is not advocacy a necessary part of the competition of ideas that is the driving force of scholarship? And is not advocacy an essential component of the new inclusive, multicultural university, where diverse groups are for the first time asserting themselves? If advocacy were limited, would this not inhibit, even repress, these new constituencies?

Some of the speakers qualified their enthusiasm. Advocacy, they allowed, should not mean indoctrination; students should feel free to disagree with a professor and not be penalized if they do so; although no professor is obliged to present a "balanced view," the curriculum as a whole should provide balance; civility, rather than objectivity, should be the goal of the scholar; and—a cautionary note—professors should be wary of expressing views that might bring complaints of harassment from students.

But there were also those who spurned such compromises. "I let my students know," one professor declared, "where I'm coming from, and also that they're free to write papers which disagree with positions I've taken in class. But those papers had better be very, very good because I'll read them with a more critical eye than the ones I agree with." "Neutrality," said the head of a women's-studies department, "is not something I want to encourage in my students"—or in the classroom, where she declines to present the views of anti-feminists. Still another professor spoke of the "transformative" experience of her students, whose term papers were based on their work at rape-crisis centers, battered-women's shelters, and AIDS clinics. Asked whether that experience would be equally valuable if they had worked at a pro-life center or at a branch of the NRA, she replied that that was "not the same thing."

This notion of advocacy, which is as intolerant of others' opinions as it is indulgent of one's own, was reflected in another talk at the MLA conference by a philosophy professor, who insisted that politics is as relevant in the sciences as in the arts. He himself, he said, was frankly a "partisan," in contrast to those who merely appeared to favor neutrality but in reality were "dogmatists"; the latter were the true enemies of the "open classroom."

IF FEMINISTS tend to be most outspoken in supporting and practicing advocacy, it is because they believe most fervently in the principle, "Everything is political." Since women are the victims of an oppressive, patriarchal power structure (so the argument goes), they are obliged to be no less political in combating that power structure. Theirs is the class struggle "engendered," as it were. Moreover, every aspect of their lives is implicated in the struggle. Hence the corollary principle: "the personal is political."

The personal has always been high on the agenda of women's-studies courses. As *Mother Jones*, hardly a magazine hostile to feminism, reports of an informal survey of such courses: "In many classes discussions alternate between the personal and the political, with mere pit stops at the academic." On the theory that female students have been deprived not only of power but of the very awareness of their powerlessness, many women's-studies courses are devoted to "consciousness-raising." Thus, the classes are sometimes little more than rap sessions, or, at a more elevated level, group-therapy sessions, in which students and professor alike dwell on their own experiences, feelings, and grievances. Even courses ostensibly devoted to the history or literature of women in earlier times often infuse those subjects with the sentiments of a latter-day feminism, stripping away the "false consciousness" imposed by the regnant patriarchy and restoring the "voice" women never had.

Recently, the personal has taken on a new urgency at our universities and is invading courses and subjects far removed from women's studies. Out of postmodernism, with its suspicion of logic as "logocentric," of reason as "phallocentric," of objectivity as "authoritarian," there has emerged a new subjectivism—a new "personalism," one might call it—that exalts the scholar's own feelings, sensations, emotions, and private experiences.

This trend has been described in articles bearing such provocative titles as "The I's Have It," "Dare We Say 'I'?," and "Don't Leave Out the Juicy Things" (meaning the personal things). The point is not that professors have taken to writing their autobiographies. Rather, they are being autobiographical no matter what they may happen to be writing about: Japanese society, primitivism and Western culture, the story of a Mexican peddler, the analysis of a French painter. The personalist mode exhibits itself not in an occasional intrusion of reminiscences or experiences but as a dominating presence. The traditionally impersonal voice of the scholar—the "footnote voice," as it has been disparagingly called—has been replaced by the triumphal "I." "George Eliot, *c'est moi*," announces a recent biographer of the great 19th-century novelist.

The new "personalism" has progressed far enough to invite some derisory comments. "The ideology of . . . Miss Piggy," one critic calls it. Another complains that professors have become "self-absorbed and confessional." Still another speaks of the scholars' "nouveau solipsism." Such

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solipsism, or narcissism, seems to be far removed from political advocacy. Yet it is itself an invitation to any kind of advocacy, now justified by the ultimate authority, the sensibility of the professor. At the very least, it is another way of imposing the professor's agenda upon the student, who is once again made hostage to the professor's preoccupations.

As we depart ever more from the traditional conception of the university, it is important to reflect on the momentum of ideas that has brought us to this point. For these ideas affect not only our views about advocacy—*how* professors communicate with students and with the scholarly community—but also our views about scholarship itself—*what* is being communicated, what we take to be the nature of the scholarly enterprise and the function of the university.

In the absence of any idea—or ideal—of truth, or objectivity, or disinterested knowledge, how is one to judge scholarly merit? What safeguards are there against willful ignorance and deception? If everything is political, if, indeed, the personal is political, we are truly in the condition depicted by Nietzsche: "Nothing is true; everything is permitted." This is a prescription not for academic freedom, but for intellectual and moral nihilism. Fortunately, we are not yet in that condition. Not all professors, perhaps not most professors, subscribe to the new doctrines, and not all who do act upon them. But there is no doubt that relativism and subjectivism are more pervasive than ever and have been carried to extremes that would not have been tolerated only a few years ago.

In *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* by the English novelist and essayist Julian Barnes, the narrator explains why a world bereft of the idea of truth would be humanly, morally intolerable:

> We all know objective truth is not obtainable; that when some event occurs we shall have a multiplicity of subjective truths which we assess and then fabulate into history, into some God-eyed version of what "really" happened. . . . But while we know this, we must still believe that objective truth is obtainable; or we must believe that it is 99 per cent obtainable; or if we can't believe this we must believe that 43 per cent objective truth is better than 41 per cent. We must do so, because if we don't we're lost, we fall into beguiling relativity, we value one liar's version as much as another liar's, we throw up our hands at the puzzle of it all, we admit that the victor has the right not just to the spoils but also to the truth.

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# The Color of Jazz

*Terry Teachout*

GRP Records, which owns the catalogue of Decca, a prominent record label of the 30's and 40's, recently released a two-CD set of jazz performances originally recorded by the older company. The set contains classic recordings by Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet, Coleman Hawkins, Fletcher Henderson, Billie Holiday, and other artists. More significant than the album's contents, however, is its title: *Black Legends of Jazz.*

As recently as a decade ago, it would have been inconceivable for a major label to release such an album. Not only would the title have been considered offensive, it would have been seen as untrue to the spirit of jazz. To be sure, black and white musicians did not perform together on stage until the mid-30's, and even now, racially mixed bands, like racially mixed couples, are uncommon enough to catch the eye. But the cultural ethos of jazz was for the most part firmly free of race-consciousness. Louis Armstrong, the most important figure in jazz, spoke for most musicians when he said, "It's no crime for cats of any color to get together and blow."

But American culture has changed greatly since Armstrong died in 1971, and jazz has changed with it. Race-consciousness—on the part of individuals and institutions alike—is now a powerful force in the world of jazz, one whose effects have only just begun to come clear.

Last October, Representative John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.), learned that the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, an ensemble organized by the Smithsonian Institution to play the music of the big-band era, normally engages a half-dozen black musicians out of its total of sixteen members. In a letter sent to the Smithsonian and later published in the *Washington Times*, Conyers said he found this proportion "extremely disturbing," adding that

> I want people who experience the Orchestra in performance to hear and see jazz for what it has been and is—a product of the African-American cultural experience. While jazz has certainly inspired the participation and creativity of all Americans, as well as other people around the world, the lack of real racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among the Orchestra's members presents an unrealistic image of who plays this music which I urge you to expeditiously correct. . . .

As it happens, Conyers's letter was not only crudely threatening but historically ill-informed. So far as can be determined, jazz was "invented" around the turn of the 20th century by New Orleans blacks of widely varying musical education and ethnic background (many were Creoles, the mixed-blood descendants of French slaveholders and their female slaves). But whites were playing jazz within a decade of its initial appearance, and began making important contributions to its stylistic development shortly thereafter. Until fairly recently, most musicians and scholars agreed that jazz long ago ceased to be a uniquely black idiom and became "multicultural" in the truest, least politicized sense of the word. As the white guitarist Jim Hall said, "I've always felt that the music started out as black but that it's as much mine now as anyone else's."

But Conyers is hardly alone today in dissenting from this consensus. (As for the Smithsonian, it responded to his threat, predictably, by ordering the orchestra's musical directors to ensure that its "makeup . . . reflect racial balance"—that is, have more blacks and fewer whites.) Perhaps the first to do so was the black novelist and literary scholar Albert Murray in his 1976 book, *Stomping the Blues.* Murray is not a musician, and his book is an idiosyncratic interpretation of American popular music in which jazz is treated not as an independent musical form but as part of the blues, an older idiom that originated among Southern blacks at some point in the late 19th or early 20th century.

For Murray, the ability to play the blues is the defining trait of "authentic" jazz musicians. Those who do not play the blues are not authentic—and white musicians, Murray implies, cannot play the blues. In the caption to the only photo in *Stomping the Blues* in which white musicians are shown, Murray succinctly describes these whites—including Pee Wee Russell and Gerry Mulligan, two of the most admired players in jazz—as members of the "third line," carefully explaining that in a New Orleans street parade, the "first line" consists of the musicians, while the "second line" is made up of "dancing-and-prancing fans and protégés . . . [who] are permitted to carry the instruments of their favorite musicians for several blocks while the band takes a breather before striking up again." The "third line" is left undefined, but its meaning is clear.

Now, just as there have always been black and white players, there have always been "black" and "white" styles in jazz. But there has also been substantial racial overlap in every important jazz style since the 20's, and it is impossible consistently to distinguish white players from black simply by listening. When the black trumpeter Roy

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Eldridge claimed to be able to do so, the jazz critic Leonard Feather gave him a "blindfold test" (subsequently described in the jazz magazine *Down Beat*) which Eldridge failed.

Feather also popularized the term "Crow Jim" to refer to the reverse-racist belief that white jazz musicians are by definition derivative and second-rate. Indeed, some were—and are. But three of the most influential players in the history of jazz, the cornetist Bix Beiderbecke, the clarinetist Benny Goodman, and the pianist Bill Evans, were white, and the list of white jazz instrumentalists universally acknowledged by their peers as artists of the first rank also includes Jack Teagarden, Bunny Berigan (whom Louis Armstrong cited as his own favorite trumpeter), Artie Shaw, Bobby Hackett, Dave Tough, Red Norvo, Buddy Rich, Jimmy Rowles, Art Pepper, Stan Getz, Paul Desmond, Jim Hall, and countless others. Moreover, as the songwriter and jazz journalist Gene Lees has amply documented in his book, *Cats of Any Color: Jazz, Black and White,** many noted black jazz musicians have readily acknowledged the influence of white players.

Murray deals with these awkward facts by ignoring them—just as, on the other side, he ignores the fact that such indisputably major jazz figures as Earl Hines, Coleman Hawkins, Fats Waller, Teddy Wilson, and Art Tatum, all of them black, were not blues players. With the sole exception of the drummer Gene Krupa, who is described as a "white drummer of the so-called Swing Era," no white musician is mentioned in the main text of *Stomping the Blues*, favorably or otherwise. Murray does not say explicitly that whites cannot play jazz, but that is what he means: whites who try to play the blues are by definition derivative, and thus of no interest; whites who do not play the blues are by definition not playing jazz, and thus also of no interest.

Only Whitney Balliett of the *New Yorker* drew attention to the racist implications of Murray's thesis when *Stomping the Blues* was published. The failure of other critics to do so, though inexcusable, is easily understood. By 1976, the audience for jazz was predominantly white, a fact of which black jazz musicians were intensely aware. Books like *Stomping the Blues* were seen by most jazz writers as part of the larger project of fostering "black pride," and their ideological underpinnings were accordingly downplayed or ignored.

ONE critic who read *Stomping the Blues* closely was Stanley Crouch, who called it "the most eloquent book ever written about African-American music" and, even more interestingly, "the first real aesthetic theory of jazz."

Crouch, an erstwhile drummer with little musical training, is best known for his provocative essays on American culture, many of which were collected in his 1990 book, *Notes of a Hanging Judge*. These essays have earned him a reputation as one of the few prominent black writers willing to challenge the prevailing Left-liberal orthodoxy on racial matters. Thus, Crouch has called the black filmmaker Spike Lee a "fascist"; described the black novelist Toni Morrison as a "literary conjure woman" who is "as American as P. T. Barnum"; and suggested that "the sob squad of white liberals . . . spend some time talking to the victims of the third-world criminals they sympathize with so much."

But in his jazz criticism, Crouch paradoxically adopts a Crow Jim line very nearly as rigid and ahistorical as that of Albert Murray. Unlike Murray, Crouch has on occasion expressed admiration for certain white players. But in his critical lexicon, "the Afro-American approach to sound and rhythm" is the only true way to play jazz, and even celebrated black players like Miles Davis are diminished in value to the degree that they succumb to "the academic temptation of Western music." (Crouch here presumably means "classical" music, since jazz is self-evidently a form of Western music.)

In "The Duke, the King, and the City of Jazz," a 1989 review of Gunther Schuller's *The Swing Era*, Crouch comments on only one white musician, Benny Goodman, whose big band he calls "inferior" in quality to its black counterparts (an opinion that, while politically correct, is musically questionable). Given the fact that some 150 pages of *The Swing Era* are devoted to white bands and soloists of the 30's and 40's, one must conclude that, like Murray, Crouch considers their work to be of no interest.

When Crouch does deign to notice white musicians, his remarks are often scathing. He has publicly called Bill Evans, perhaps the most admired jazz pianist of the 60's and 70's, a "punk." In a 1990 essay on Miles Davis, Crouch describes that trumpeter's recorded collaborations with the white composer-arranger Gil Evans, one of the two or three most important arrangers in the history of jazz, in terms no less contemptuous of the white contribution to jazz:

> [T]hose albums . . . reveal that Davis could be taken by pastel versions of European colors (they are given what value they have in these sessions by the Afro-American dimensions that were never far from Davis's embouchure, breath, fingering); if Davis's trumpet voice is removed, in fact, a good number of Evans's arrangements sound like high-level television music.

Whether or not these remarks are "racist" is a matter of opinion. But that they are *racialist*—manifestations, that is, of an ideology in which race is a primary factor in the making of aesthetic judgments—is unquestionable. Moreover, through his connection with the black trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, Stanley Crouch is in a position to act on his convictions.

CROUCH met Marsalis in the early 80's, introduced him to Albert Murray, and, by his own account, undertook to teach him the history of jazz. Today, Crouch supplies obsequious liner notes for Marsalis's recordings ("Marsalis brings his own heroic individuality to the expression of tenderness magnified and recalled by a stretch of trumpet tones and ensemble colors that are themselves contrasted

* Oxford University Press, 246 pp., $25.00.

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by the celebratory swing of eroticism ascended to the diamond point of romantic precision . . .") and, more important, under the title of artistic adviser, plays a key role in the programming of Jazz at Lincoln Center, the New York concert series led by Marsalis.

Under Marsalis and Crouch, Jazz at Lincoln Center presents only programs about black musicians; whites are allowed to play with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, but the historic contributions of earlier white players, composers, and arrangers are systematically ignored, and contemporary white composers are not commissioned to write original pieces for the full orchestra. This policy is so egregiously race-conscious that it has even been attacked by admirers of Wynton Marsalis, including Peter Watrous, jazz critic for the *New York Times*. As Watrous has been quoted, bluntly, in the magazine *JazzTimes*:

> They say . . . they have to put on all the important figures before they get to the lesser-knowns, and that there happen to be more important figures who are black. That's complete bullshit.

Marsalis is unapologetic about such matters, and apparently he can afford to be. At thirty-three, in addition to having performed and recorded much of the classical trumpet literature, he is the most famous jazz musician in America. He has appeared on the covers of *Time* and the *New York Times Magazine*; he has been under exclusive contract to Sony, one of the biggest record labels in the world, since 1981; and he has composed ballet scores for New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theater, and extended concert works presented by Jazz at Lincoln Center. Young musicians who have worked in his band subsequently find it easy to get lucrative recording contracts of their own. If there is a jazz counterpart to Leonard Bernstein, it is Wynton Marsalis.

Interestingly, not all of these achievements hold up equally well under scrutiny. Technically speaking, Marsalis is a virtuoso by any conceivable standard, and even so formidable a music critic as the late B.H. Haggin considered him a first-rate classical trumpeter. But his jazz playing is felt by many to be cold and, ironically enough, derivative. In a sense, it is derivative by design: Marsalis was one of a number of stylistically conservative players of the late 70's and early 80's who rejected the avant-garde techniques of the 60's in favor of a "neoclassical" approach in which older jazz styles, rather than being rejected out of hand as outmoded, were revived and updated. He has deliberately sought to incorporate in his playing a wide variety of stylistic elements from great jazz trumpeters of the past. But the results, especially when he uses Louis Armstrong-derived techniques, have a generic quality that suggests an incomplete assimilation of his sources.

About his large-scale compositional efforts there is little disagreement, at least among musicians not connected with his various enterprises: they are unfinished, sometimes even frankly amateurish, and betray a lack of technique startling in an artist so generously equipped in other areas. The fact that he has been the frequent recipient of commissions from Jazz at Lincoln Center is little short of scandalous.

MARSALIS takes seriously his job as unappointed spokesman for Albert Murray's and Stanley Crouch's version of the jazz tradition. Ever since he began giving interviews in the early 80's, he has been quick to criticize other musicians, notably Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins, for "selling out" to commercial music. He is just as quick to attack his critics, especially those who accuse him of reverse racism. And he is adamant in defending his conduct as artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. "I get no flak from the general public and I get no flak from musicians," he told a reporter for *JazzTimes* earlier this year.

The latter is untrue. Indeed, whether or not Wynton Marsalis is a racist is a common topic of conversation among New York musicians. Although he uses white players both in the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and in his own groups, it is widely believed that he harbors a general disdain for white musicians, and the belief seems to be borne out by facts. As the jazz journalist W. Royal Stokes pointed out earlier this year, "the ratio on concert dates in [Jazz at Lincoln Center] . . . has consistently been in the neighborhood of ten black musicians to one white."

In one strikingly unguarded moment on the black-oriented TV talk show, *Tony Brown's Journal*, Marsalis went even farther, complaining that the music business is controlled by

> people who read the Torah and stuff. . . . Every idiom of black music, be it jazz, rhythm-and-blues, or whatever, has declined in its negroidery and purpose. It became more whitified. It's not the white people's fault. The white people, they do what they do to support the misconceptions that they started when they brought the brothers and sisters over here as slaves. We are, in effect, in a state of war. . . .

Anyone seeking to understand the "aesthetic theory" behind Marsalis's artistic leadership of Jazz at Lincoln Center should examine these remarks closely, side by side with the following passage in Stanley Crouch's liner notes for the Marsalis album, *The Majesty of the Blues*:

> But we must understand that the money-lenders of the marketplace have never EVER known the difference between an office or an auction block and a temple, they have never known that there was an identity to anything other than that of a hustle, a shuck, a scam, a game.*

THE commercial success of Wynton Marsalis has led several major labels to start recording jazz again. Precisely because their interest is not artistic but commercial, however, they approach jazz in the same way Hollywood seeks to replicate successful movies: by looking for Marsalis clones. The Marsalis family itself has provided several candidates, starting with Branford Marsalis, an accomplished

*Both passages are cited by Gene Lees in *Cats of Any Color*.

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tenor-saxophone player who started out as a sideman with his younger brother's group and eventually became Doc Severinsen's successor as bandleader on the *Tonight Show.*

An entire "school" of young jazz neoclassicists, many of whom have worked with Wynton Marsalis, has lately emerged, collectively known in the jazz press as the "Young Lions" and referred to by more skeptical colleagues as "young black men in suits." (Many of them emulate Marsalis's taste in clothing.) Most of these players are still too young and inexperienced to have developed individual styles, though a few, including the tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman and the bassist Christian McBride, have considerable talent.* But virtually all have one thing in common: their race.

It is, by contrast, comparatively rare for a major record label to sign a young white player, and all but unheard-of for a middle-aged white player to be signed. A typical case is that of Phil Woods, a sixty-three-year-old white who is by common consent among the greatest living saxophonists in jazz, but who works only six months each year with his own band and has not had a major-label recording contract since 1978.

In the long run, market forces will restore some kind of balance to the present situation in recorded jazz. (It has not escaped the attention of music-business insiders that sales of Wynton Marsalis's records have been declining for the last few years.) But jazz is also affected by noncommercial institutions funded in whole or part by public money, and thus subject not only to market forces but also to political pressures. The intimidation of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra by Representative Conyers is an example of such pressure at work. Another, cited by Gene Lees, is the American Jazz Masters Fellowship awards. Between 1982 and 1994, 39 of these awards, worth $20,000 each, were made by the National Endowment for the Arts. Only two went to white musicians.

One can easily multiply such examples to show how reverse racism has become, if not universal, then powerfully legitimate in jazz, and indeed how it has insinuated itself throughout the jazz community. When an important historical study like Ted Gioia's *West Coast Jazz* fails to be reviewed in major publications, is it because the book is thought unworthy of serious attention by book-review editors—or because West Coast jazz, dominated as it was by whites, is itself presumed unworthy of attention? When a white jazz critic like Tom Piazza complains that Bill Evans "doesn't swing enough" and "can't play the blues," is he making a genuine critical judgment—or merely aping the Crouch-Murray white-boys-can't-play-jazz party line? In a cultural environment where race has become an admissible criterion for aesthetic judgments, there is no way to answer these questions: the mere fact that they have to be asked is evidence of the corrosion wrought by racialist thinking.

THE new reverse racism in jazz is not, of course, an isolated phenomenon. It has arisen at a time when such government policies as quota-based affirmative action have made race-consciousness a pervasive feature of American society. In the absence of those policies—and the underlying political beliefs that drive them—it is unlikely that public institutions like Lincoln Center and the Smithsonian Institution would lend the prestige of their names to artistic enterprises run on racialist lines, or submit meekly to the demands of cynical politicians playing the "race card."

But that is just what makes the current epidemic in the world of jazz so disturbing, and its implications so far-reaching. Throughout much of its century-long history, jazz has been a relatively safe haven from the storms of ideology, a meritocracy of comrades in which, as musicians say, "every tub sits on its own bottom," and artists are judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their choruses. No such society-within-a-society is perfect, and jazz is no exception; but those who have lived and worked in its environs know how close it has come to the ideal.

Albert Murray, Stanley Crouch, and Wynton Marsalis all claim as their musical heroes Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, both of whom knew the sting of racism their whole lives long. Yet Armstrong, a man of extraordinary generosity of spirit, never yielded to the temptation to treat white musicians as he had been treated by the white world. Instead, he accepted them as colleagues. "I'm a spade, and you're an ofay," he said to the trombonist Jack Teagarden, one of his closest musical associates. "We got the same soul—so let's blow."

As for Duke Ellington, the man who composed *Black, Brown, and Beige* also told an interviewer in 1945:

> Twenty years ago when jazz was finding an audiences, it may have had more of a Negro character. The Negro element is still important. But jazz has become a part of America. There are as many white musicians playing it as Negro. . . . We are all working along more or less the same lines. We learn from each other. Jazz is American now. *American* is the big word.

Five decades later, this spirit is being undermined by cultural politicians for whom the word "American" has validity only when it lies on the far side of a hyphen. That jazz, the ultimate cultural melting pot and arguably America's most important contribution to the fine arts, should have fallen victim to such divisive thinking is an especially telling index of the unhappy state of our culture at the end of the 20th century.

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*In a "blindfold test" published in the August 1995 issue of *Down Beat*, the black drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith made the following penetrating comments about a recording by some of the most prominent of the Young Lions: "Here, there's a high level of proficiency, but the spirit of really forging forward, striving to create a new direction of sound, I don't get. . . . I don't get a strong individual personality out of any of them."

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## The Devil in the Details

THE ORIGIN OF SATAN. By ELAINE PAGELS. *Random House. 214 pp. $23.00.*

*Reviewed by* JON D. LEVENSON

At a time when books about angels make the best-seller lists, it is refreshing to have one about the devil—if only to remind us that religion is not all sweetness and light; it also has a dark side, which in turn mirrors the dark side of life and of the human heart.

"Certainly [the New Testament gospels] *are* about love," Elaine Pagels remembers telling a friend infected with the popular sentimental view of religion, "but since the story they have to tell involves betrayal and killing, they also include elements of hostility which evoke demonic images." It is the most demonic figure in Christianity, the figure of Satan himself, that Pagels, a professor of religion at Princeton University, explores in her new book.

But who is Satan? In the Hebrew Bible, Pagels acknowledges, "Satan" refers only to someone in an adversarial posture and not to a fallen angel. Nevertheless, she detects the origins of a figure somewhat foreshadowing the Satan of the Christians as early as the book of Genesis, when God singles out Abraham and his descendants for an especially exalted destiny and a special blessing. This process of selection Pagels repeatedly connects to the anthropological theory that "the world view of most peoples consists essentially of two pairs of binary oppositions: human/not human and we/they," with the result that people "dehumanize enemies, especially in wartime."

If the ancient idea of a chosen people laid the groundwork, Pagels writes, it was Jewish sectarians of the late-Second Temple period who developed the biblical Satan into the familiar devil of Western tradition. These dissident Jews projected their opponents into the heavens, and interpreted their own struggles as merely the terrestrial manifestation of a cosmic war between the God of Israel and His demonic antagonist. The irony is that in the next turn of events, which saw the emergence of Christianity, the Jews themselves would come to be identified with the antagonist, and the Christian minority would assume the mantle of the righteous remnant allied with the faithful Jewish God.

Thus, the New Testament Gospel of Mark, a book written (according to Pagels) in the aftermath of the great 1st-century Jewish revolt against imperial Rome, works hard to establish that "Jesus' followers had no quarrel with the Romans"; rather, their quarrel was "with the Jewish leaders . . . who had rejected God's messiah" and thus proved themselves "insane or possessed of demons." Mark tends, in fact, "to minimize the role of the Romans and to place increasing blame instead upon Jesus' *Jewish* enemies," and he does so, Pagels observes, by "plac[ing] the story of Jesus within the context of God's struggle with Satan."

Pagels traces the continuation and escalation of this identification of the Jews with Satan through the other canonical gospels. In an especially astute observation about Matthew, she notes that behind Herod's attempt to find the infant Jesus and kill him lies a startling reversal of roles: now the *Jewish* king acts as Pharaoh, and Egypt, to which Jesus' parents escape with him, becomes a place of refuge rather than oppression. In the Gospel of John, Jesus even tells the Jews that their father is not Abraham but the devil, and that it is the latter whose work they have chosen to do.

Inherited from Judaism, the figure of Satan survived the Church's breaking loose from its Jewish matrix and came to be applied to other enemies, both external and internal. As Pagels demonstrates, ancient Christians were no more reluctant to demonize Greco-Roman pagans and heterodox Christians, especially the gnostics, than they were to demonize the Jews. Thus, in the 2nd century C.E., the Christian apologist Justin tells the Roman emperor and his sons that, "Even now these demons seek to keep you as their slaves, by preventing you from understanding what we say." Tertullian, a church father of the next generation, attributes heretical biblical interpretation to "the devil, of course, to whom belong the wiles that distort the truth."

TO PAGELS, this cumulative evidence of orthodox Christian association of Jews, pagans, and heretics with Satan compels her central thesis: "Satan" is the ancient Jewish and Christian name for the human "other," for people who are different from ourselves and pose a challenge to our identity.

Despite this grim picture, however, and despite her abundant personal distaste for orthodox theology, Pagels is not ready to give up on Christianity. She finds substantial palliation of its unfortunate demonizing tendency in ancient gnostic texts like the Gospel of Thomas, in which the kingdom of God is not a place or an event but, as she puts it, "a state of self-discovery" or "transformed consciousness" brought about by the attainment of self-knowledge.

Thomas, Pagels remarks, "teaches that when one comes to know oneself, at the deepest level, one simultaneously knows God as the source of one's being," and one thus becomes an identical twin to Jesus. Another gnostic text, the Gospel of Philip, similarly "interprets the human inclination to sin without recourse to Satan," and finds the antidote to that inclina-

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tion not in God's action but in human self-recognition.

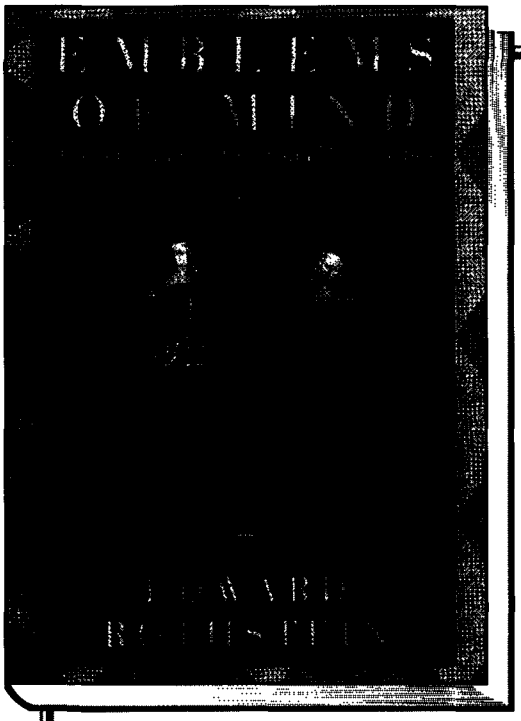
Most appealing to Pagels is a source in the canonical gospels which some scholars have associated with gnosticism and which presents Jesus as calling upon Christians to be reconciled with their enemies and even to love them. This call she sees as the reverse of the demonization of opponents that prevails elsewhere in the canonical gospels and the Church Fathers. For Elaine Pagels, in the end the true struggle within Christianity is "between the profoundly human view that 'otherness' is evil and the words of Jesus that reconciliation is divine."

THERE is little in *The Origin of Satan* that is new. Indeed, the book is almost entirely derivative and seems to have been hastily patched together. For example, the term "gnosis" is initially defined only near the close, after several discussions of gnostic texts have gone by. Still, popularizations of sound scholarship can be valuable and can help remind us of things too easily forgotten.

One such thing has to do, precisely, with the dark side of life, the side more suggestive of devils than of angels. In Pagels's book, however, this dark side of life seems to be given short shrift—and how dark can it be, when it can be vanquished by nothing more than self-recognition? Her attention, rather, falls on a very different matter, the dark side of *religion*, especially orthodox Christian religion.

In this connection, some of her points are both well-taken and timely. Of special interest today, when the Jewish community is agitated over the question of fundamentalist Christian participation in politics, are her observations about the ways in which the New Testament gospels associate the Jews with Satan. Christian thought about Jews and about Judaism is extremely complex and many-sided; over the centuries, it has generated both anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism. Even today, a Christian can be philo-Semitic in some areas—as in supporting Israel—while at the same time regarding the New Testament demonization of the Jews as inerrant, and working fervently for their conversion to Christianity. Christian philo-Semitism is a newer phenomenon than Christian anti-Semitism, and only time will tell whether it has anything approaching the latter's phenomenal durability.

EVEN when her points are valid, however, Pagels's development of them is often flawed both in detail and in conception. Her discussions lie at a considerable remove from the ancient texts themselves and occasionally mischaracterize them. She tells us, for example, that in the important Jewish work known as the Book of Jubilees, "it is Mastema [a devil]—not the Lord—who commands Abraham to kill his son, Isaac." In point of fact, in Jubilees as in Genesis it is the Lord who orders the sacrifice; all Mastema does is to suggest the command as a way by which God may



FROM THE RENOWNED MUSIC CRITIC —

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—Hugh Kenner, *The Wall Street Journal*

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ascertain whether Abraham's faithfulness to him outweighs his love for Isaac.

More serious, and more indicative of her own conceptual confusion, is Pagels's misinterpretation of God's initial promise to Abraham in Genesis. Concerning the words, "whoever blesses you I will bless; and whoever curses you I will curse," Pagels observes that God "simultaneously defines and constitutes [the Abrahamic nation's] enemies as inferior and potentially accursed." But the text she quotes says nothing at all about inferiority, and does not identify the "others" as enemies or associate them with accursedness. She could just as truthfully have written that outsiders are here seen as potential friends and potentially blessed.

To do so, however, Pagels would have had to give up the point, crucial to her whole argument, that the we/they dichotomy is synonymous with the dichotomy of human/nonhuman. In fact, the Hebrew Bible and the rabbinic tradition offer plentiful evidence that it is at least possible to maintain a firm distinction between insiders and outsiders without necessarily identifying outsiders as nonhuman, cursed, or diabolical. One has the sense that, in her discussion of Jewish texts, Pagels is engaging in a certain demonization of her own—a demonization of Jewish particularism as an example of misanthropy.

PAGELS's distaste for Christian orthodoxy and her lack of generosity toward Judaism are more than matched on the other side by her idealization of gnosticism. A more balanced discussion would have emphasized that the gnostic texts which she contrasts favorably with the canonical gospels are, in most and perhaps in all cases, of a later date and speak to a different situation. And in any case, they do more than celebrate innocuous things like self-discovery, self-recognition, and the transformation of consciousness: they also demonize. And among the occasional victims of their demonization is none other than the God of Israel, identified as a lesser deity, the foolish demiurge who created the inferior world of matter from which the gnostic believes he can liberate himself.

If we adopt Pagels's own model of religion as a mirror of social reality, it is hard to see how this demonization could reflect anything other than the animosity of Christian gnostics toward the Jews. She herself notes that the gnostic Gospel of Philip "at one point uses the terms 'Hebrew' and 'Christian' to compare the relationship between those who have received only the *preliminary* revelation and those who have received the fuller understanding of *gnosis*." Except for the term *gnosis*, the pattern here is the altogether familiar one of classical Christian supersessionism. If a statement like this had appeared in a canonical rather than a gnostic gospel, would Pagels have been so inclined to overlook its invidiousness? If not, then she should have been compelled to acknowledge that demonization can occur even in the absence of the figure of Satan, and that the gnostic's voyage inward provides no immunity against prejudice, theological or otherwise.

IN HER introduction, Pagels tells us that she is interested in how the figure of Satan "is invoked to express human conflict and to characterize human enemies within our own religious traditions." By the time she reaches her conclusion, however, she has changed direction. No longer is Satan a figure invoked by humans to "express" their conflicts; he has become, rather, a *projection* of human conflict, a product (in the words I quoted earlier) of "the profoundly human view that 'otherness' is evil." The effect of her book is thus to reverse the classical religious view that Satan is the origin of conflict. Here, conflict is the origin of Satan.

There are criticisms of both method and substance to be made about this reduction of religious phenomena to social and psychological configurations. For one thing, if Satan is a human construct, why not God as well? But if God is nothing but a human construct, how can Pagels speak of anything—even reconciliation and the love of one's enemies—as truly "divine"? Why should Elaine Pagels's particular values and ideals—for which her use of the word "divine" is presumably metaphoric—be exempt from the guillotine of the social constructionist?

In this way, *The Origin of Satan* nicely reflects how the academic method known as the "hermeneutics of suspicion" is usually applied in religion departments and divinity schools today. What gets "suspected" is principally traditional religious belief, never the (unexamined) beliefs of those doing the suspecting. Elaine Pagels is no exception.

But let us return to substance. It is true, as Pagels argues, that the belief in Satan has tempted people to demonize those who are innocent, and has thereby contributed to human sinfulness; given the grim view of human nature taken by traditional theologies, that should hardly be unexpected. But there is another side to this particular coin. If Satan is a name for the nearly irresistible force that tempts people to do things that their own minds, in clearer moments, should abominate, may not a belief in Satan also energize people to do *good* things, things that their own minds and spirits might never otherwise attempt?

I think, for example, of the young Lutheran pastor and theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45). After having been dismissed by the Nazis from his post in Germany, Bonhoeffer lectured for a while in America, and then chose to return home at the outbreak of World War II. Once there, he resumed his anti-Nazi work, for which he was eventually imprisoned in Buchenwald. Days before the war ended, he was hanged for his involvement in the attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler.

Early on, in castigating a Christian organization sympathetic to Nazism, Bonhoeffer invoked the inflammatory term, "Anti-Christ," which designates a figure not too different from Satan. Had he not believed in the pessimistic Christian theology out of which the idea of the Anti-Christ grew, would he have chosen his heroic path of resistance to evil? Or would he, like the pro-Nazi Christians, have cho-

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sen instead the path of compromise and accommodation? Or perhaps the neo-gnostic course: exhorting the Fuehrer to engage in self-discovery, with a view toward transforming his consciousness and discovering the divine spark deep within?

Given the mysterious capacity of human beings for unspeakable evil, a belief in Satan and his works may lead not only to acts of demonization, but also to acts of redemption. In explaining away the true challenge posed by the satanic to the divine—and posed, as well, to us—Elaine Pagels unwittingly contributes to the sentimental view of religion that a more hard-headed and provocative book than hers might have helped to correct.

## The Futurama Is Now

1939: THE LOST WORLD OF THE FAIR. By DAVID GELERNTER. *Free Press. 418 pp. $23.00.*

*Reviewed by*
CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

DAVID GELERNTER is a polymath: a professor at Yale who specializes in the theory of artificial intelligence, a software designer, a painter, a classical composer, an author. Two summers ago, in the first of these capacities, he was the victim of a letter bomb from the Unabomber that left him with massive eye, hand, and internal injuries from which he is still recovering. Gelernter is also of a religious cast of mind: the grandson of a rabbi, he attended a yeshiva in Manhattan in the late 1970's, and took his B.A. at Yale in religious studies.

All of Gelernter's enthusiasms are visible in everything he does and writes, and *1939: The Lost World of the Fair* is no exception, being three discrete books braided into one. The first is a history of the 1939 World's Fair; the second a religious meditation on what separates the optimistic world view of "high-30's" culture from our own; the third a harrowing semi-fictional love story.

Gelernter has not built his book this way by accident. In *The Muse in the Machine: Computerizing the Poetry of Human Thought* (1994)—in which he put forward the idea that human creativity stems from "low-focus" states closer to sleep than to concentration—he invoked both the Torah and the English Romantic poets to show how disconnected fragments in a narrative can generate associations and even messages that logic is incapable of expressing. Adducing the seemingly arbitrary sequence of stories in Exodus describing the flight from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, he observed an "organizing principle at work": these chapters of Exodus are "a kind of literary solar system, where an ensemble of stories is anchored in place by a key passage." Similarly, Gelernter has made the 1939 World's Fair not the subject of his new book but merely the sun of its "literary solar system."

Of the three strands running through the book, Gelernter's monographic treatment of the fair itself is intrinsically the least interesting. The fair opened on May 18, 1939 on a dump reclaimed by City Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, and ran for two seasons. Dozens of industrial companies and every major country except China and Nazi Germany built their own elaborate pavilions, dioramas, statuary, and amusements. The most famous buildings—the gargantuan obelisk named the Trylon, and the Perisphere that nestled at its base—became futuristic symbols to a generation.

Gelernter's architectural descriptions of the fair are nearly endless ("The bluish helmet-like structure is lifted off the ground on a sort of colonnade, supported on vast curving steel ribs with holes punched out. . ."), and his attention to minutiae can be deadening. Of greater interest is his exposition of how, during the two seasons the fair was open—while half of Europe fell to the Nazis—Americans took to it in an orgy of opti-

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL *is a senior writer at the* Weekly Standard.

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mism. Over 40 million attended, and Gelernter demonstrates what the fuss was about.

The fair saw the birth of television, the first use of a fax machine, the first synthesizer (the "Novachord"), and the introduction of nylons and fluorescent lights. A "Futurama," designed by Norman Bel Geddes for the General Motors Pavilion, showed the world of the 1960's—and it was a world the fairgoers liked. Inside the Perisphere, they could view "Democracity," a utopian community of 1960 that eschewed the "planless jumble of slum and chimney" for an urban mass crossed by high-speed freeways—in other words, postwar suburbia.

That fairgoers were more engaged by dishwashers than by the cultural uplift offered in the pavilions of the various nations or by the robots in assembly-line displays has led some later academic historians to view the commercial exhibits as exploitative, and even as the *cause* of modern suburban materialism. Gelernter finds this ludicrous. "It takes an intellectual to suggest that women had to be brainwashed into wanting electric kitchen appliances," he writes. "When critics complain about the fair, what really pains them, it seems to me, is the character of American society itself."

THAT character is the subject of Gelernter's second sub-book. If, for Americans of 1939, the radiant future consisted of suburbia and consumerism, why are we so unhappy now that we have it? His answer is that the country has changed profoundly in the intervening decades: "As we study and contemplate the late-30's United States, it comes to resemble our own country less and less."

To Gelernter, the change amounts to this: the America of 1939 was a religious community in a way ours is not. He is speaking here not so much of a church- or synagogue-based religion as of the "American civic religion," centered on the belief in progress but encompassing an entire view of the world and of how humans ought to behave in it.

In 1939, Gelernter writes, certain distinctions which we properly think of as religious—"between sacred and profane, priest and layman, holy and ordinary day, kosher and *trayf*, saint and sinner"—had their clear secular analogues—"the way boys were treated versus girls, ladies versus gentlemen, . . . legitimate offspring versus bastards, . . . high culture versus low," etc. This collection of attitudes formed in turn what Gelernter calls an "ought" culture. Typically, he cites both the ancient rabbinic *Ethics of the Fathers* and the 1937 edition of Emily Post's *Etiquette*, to the effect that "continual practice of proper behavior on an endless succession of trivial meaningless occasions makes a person at least a *bit* more apt to act properly when the chips are down." Thanks to such ingrained habits, America in the late 1930's was a self-possessed society in which "you could leave a pile of dynamite unguarded in the middle of New York City." Today, by contrast, when such self-possession has been lost, the result is a passivity so desperate that the city cannot evict violent street people or erect a public toilet.

In moving from an "ought" culture to a "want" culture, have we at least gained in sophistication, or tolerance? Not according to Gelernter. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, he points out, campaigned in both his parents' languages (Italian and Yiddish), and used publicly the four other languages he spoke—a level of sophistication in a political figure that is unthinkable today. In another realm, while public kissing and the wearing of shorts were frowned upon in 1939, soft-core pornography was given its (allotted) place; the fair, Gelernter notes, had a porn show designed by Norman Bel Geddes ("Crystal Lassies"), and another, staged in a diving tank, designed by Salvador Dali ("Dream of Venus").

Consider, on the other hand, what has been lost. Respect for authority: at sunset on summer nights in the 30's, bathers at New York's Jones Beach stepped out of the water and saluted the flag as it was lowered. Straightforwardness: when conscription started for the war, the rejects' changing room at New York's draft board was marked *Rejects' Changing Room*. The liberalism of La Guardia, Gelernter notes admiringly, was compassionate but demanding—he paid no attention to "political whiners" and would fire on the spot any city workers he saw idling. When it came to racial matters, although blacks were "underrepresented" at the fair, a black composer, William Grant Still, wrote the "Democracity Hymn." Gelernter comments: "No one lost any sleep worrying about whether he owed the distinction to affirmative action."

But I do not want to give a false impression. Gelernter, who has described himself to the *New York Times* as "a Roosevelt Democrat with a conservative streak—'in other words, a Republican,'" would appear to fit comfortably into at least one recognizable political mode, namely, neoconservatism. Throughout his book, however, he also succumbs repeatedly to the temptation to be blandly evenhanded. Thus:

> The Right doesn't like to acknowledge that the power and authority of government can be a good thing, up to a point, in the hands of a genius. The Left doesn't like to acknowledge that geniuses are few and far between.

Or again, noting the recent arrest of a Southern woman for child abuse after spanking her child outside a supermarket: "My point is not that these events are bad or good." Still elsewhere, discussing gender equality in the workplace: "My goal is not to judge, merely to report." We wind up with the case for authority and straightforwardness being put in the language of relativism and diffidence.

GELERNTER tries to rectify this problem in the third and most successful of the intertwined books that make up *1939*. It is the story of Hortense "Hattie" Levine, née Glassman, a woman in her late seventies at the time of writing. Her story is told both through Gelernter's interviews with her and through quotations from her copious diaries which, he reports, she gave him during the course of an afternoon visit.

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As a philosophy student at Hunter College, Hattie Glassman spent all of May 18, 1939 at the fair with Mark Handler, a wisecracking "idealistic engineer" who was clearly the love of her life. Around midday, he proposed marriage and she accepted. Throughout the afternoon the two discussed whether it was right to have children at a time when, to all appearances, fascism was poised to sweep the world. Hattie resolved that they *should* multiply—"courageously, gallantly, joyfully."

The progress of this affair is one of the most moving love stories I have ever read. It provides the whole of the book's motive force, and the shocking twists the story takes are narrated by Gelernter with mastery. Hattie also serves as Gelernter's alter ego, a mouthpiece for things he himself would clearly like to say about the differences between the late 1930's and today. On multiculturalism in the schools: "More students know who Harriet Tubman is than Winston Churchill. . . . my Lord, I want to retch." On self-pity in political discourse: "Don't know if you're a whiner or not. But in 1939, poor didn't mean you had a TV set and a car and clothing and were deprived of, Lord knows, a VCR. It meant you were hungry."

But—does Hattie Levine exist? An author's note tells us that *1939* is "a history book, but the characters are made up," although "the fictional content . . . hugs the ground and mimics the dips and peaks of actual experience faithfully." So does Hattie's character mimic the dips and peaks of someone real? For the reader, not knowing the answer to this question presents a huge problem. If Hattie Levine is fictional, is the "David Gelernter" who interviews her fictional, too? And is he or is he not the same Gelernter who elsewhere in the book urges us to respect authority, and to be straightforward in our verbal undertakings?

EACH of the three strands in *1939* makes a worthy book, and Hattie Glassman's story makes a brilliant one. Unfortunately, the book's structure—and, in the Hattie Glassman sections, its animating literary conceit—let Gelernter off the hook, permitting him to avoid a head-on confrontation with many of his own strongest points. This is a pity, for his diagnosis of the crisis in American authority since 1939 merits both a more thorough and a more direct treatment. Given his wide reading, his religious training, and his status as a (literal) battle veteran in the cultural wars, Gelernter should be the man for that job.

## America and the World

SECURITY AND SACRIFICE: ISOLATION, INTERVENTION, AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. By ELLIOTT ABRAMS. *Hudson Institute. 150 pp. $12.95.*

*Reviewed by* SETH CROPSEY

THE end of the cold war has ushered in a period of considerable uncertainty about the means and, particularly, the ends of U.S. foreign policy. Many former doves have become high-flying hawks, calling for American intervention in such unlikely locales as Goradze and Kigali. On the other side of the political divide, many former hawks have shed their wings, urging restraint and caution before the United States commits its prestige and power to achieving peace and tranquility in troubled areas of the globe.

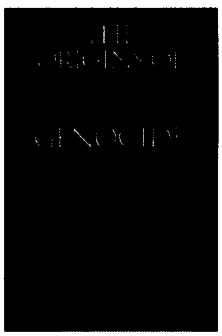
With a rising tide of confusion about what the United States should and should not do in world affairs, Elliott Abrams's new book, *Security and Sacrifice*, offers both a timely and an important contribution to the debate. In it he draws upon an acute understanding of American history and his own senior-level experience making foreign policy in the Reagan administration; the resulting work demonstrates a meritorious mixture of prudence and thoughtfulness.

ABRAMS commences by examining the wellsprings of American foreign policy from the founding of the United States to the present day. His historical approach aims to use the lessons of the past to answer a question about the future: what principles should guide American foreign policy now that the cold war has ended?

But American history does not yield easy answers; as Abrams shows, U.S. foreign policy from its earliest beginnings has tended to oscillate between isolation and intervention. The Founders saw the old world of Europe as a continent of capricious monarchies whose disputes were best kept at ocean's length. But fear of foreign entanglements rapidly came into tension with tangible American interests, as when Britain interfered with American shipping, leading the United States reluctantly to abandon neutrality and enter the War of 1812.

By the close of the 19th century, economic prosperity and expanding naval power had brought America to participate in the world beyond its shores—as in the Span-

SETH CROPSEY *was Deputy Under Secretary of the Navy in the Reagan and Bush administrations.*



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ish-American war of 1898, and again in World War I—to a degree that would have shocked some of the Founders. Still, well into the fourth decade of the 20th century, the United States continued to lurch between intervention and isolationism: it took Pearl Harbor to discredit thoroughly the idea that the nation could remain aloof from world affairs. In the wake of World War II, the overwhelming majority of Americans came to see that our country's security was intimately connected not only to developments in Europe but to events taking place on more unfamiliar terrain in the Middle East, Latin America, Indochina, and other trouble spots around the earth.

Yet even at the height of the cold war, consensus about the American role abroad remained tentative and uncertain. As Abrams documents, George Marshall's noble plan to create a bulwark against Communism by rebuilding the wreckage of European economic life was funded by Congress at a mere one-seventh of the level requested by the Truman administration. The Eisenhower administration opted for the riskiest—but also the least expensive—method of deterring a Warsaw Pact invasion of Western Europe: the threat of nuclear retaliation. In hindsight, we can say that while this policy of defending American security by cutting corners and costs succeeded in the main theater—Europe—it failed tragically in Vietnam, where the Kennedy and Johnson administrations sought to wage a limited war without engaging the public's support or asking it to foot the bill.

IF STRIKING the balance between isolationism and engagement has been problematic, it has been even more difficult for American foreign policy-makers to find an equilibrium between the assertion of American principles and the defense of national interest more narrowly conceived. Some of Abrams's most acute observations revolve around this point.

Americans, he argues, have always insisted that our country's core values—our belief in democracy and liberty—be reflected in the foreign-policy commitments we undertake. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's attempt to submerge this understanding in favor of a hard-nosed *Realpolitik* gravely undercut their own efforts by obscuring the rationale for a policy which the public would support. By contrast, the great virtue of Ronald Reagan's approach to international affairs lay in his forthright and unabashed embrace of American values, not merely in his public diplomacy but in the entire thrust of his policies abroad. Reagan's belief in America's destiny as a powerful force on behalf of the good and the free radiated to others—allies and adversaries alike—and became a significant factor in realizing victory in the cold war.

The two Presidents who followed Reagan have been far less successful. George Bush called for a "new world order," but never gave the concept flesh and blood. This deficiency in words was mirrored in deeds when he led a grand coalition in the Persian Gulf war to what appeared to be a brilliant victory, only to let it collapse into an ambiguous and unsatisfactory result.

Bill Clinton's foreign policy, with its morally neutral concept of "flexibility," is even more troubled. As Abrams shows, the administration's sharp shifts and perpetual flip-flops have severely eroded our country's capacity to lead, exposing us as muddled, self-contradictory, intellectually vacuous, and—most distressing of all—weak.

*Security and Sacrifice* concludes by noting the formidable challenges that will face America in the years to come. In Abrams's judgment, we are likely to see more frequent and more dangerous regional disputes as weapons of mass destruction continue to proliferate and once-suppressed national and ethnic tensions come unbound. While our armed forces must remain strong enough to meet these dangers, Abrams believes that our first line of defense lies in the promotion among ordinary Americans of an awareness that our future is inextricably linked to events abroad.

Creating this awareness is the task of leadership. If leadership is wanting, American policy-makers will find themselves without support when the inevitable future foreign crises come knocking at our door. It is the singular merit of Elliott Abrams's book to clarify the choices before us.

## Kitchen Faith

THE WONDERS OF AMERICA: REINVENTING JEWISH CULTURE, 1880-1950. By JENNA WEISSMAN JOSELIT. *Hill & Wang. 349 pp. $23.00.*

*Reviewed by* DAVID KLINGHOFFER

IN THIS fascinating book about the folk customs of middle-class American Jews, Jenna Weissman Joselit, a professor of religion at Princeton, explains how many commonly observable phenomena—of the sort one may never have bothered to think about—actually came to be.

Why, for instance, do suburban synagogues invariably contain gift shops, usually located in the same spot to one side of the lobby, stuffed with tacky items and run by the ladies of the "Sisterhood"? Joselit traces their origins to the late 1940's, when Jews began migrating in large numbers from the downtown areas of cities, leaving behind the centrally located stores that specialized in Jewish ritual objects. At the same time, newly affluent Jews experienced a jolt of interest in home observance, and this called for a supply of gifts and other objects sufficiently fancy to please demanding suburban matrons.

As this example suggests, the practices under discussion here are disproportionately domestic, and tend to have more to do with women than with men. They are also, many of them, food-related. Take, for another typical instance, the Jewish craving for "deli" food—and the custom that countermen in delicatessens wear white. "At first," writes Joselit, quoting her interviewees,

> Jewish housewives had . . . qualms about [the] nutritive value [of this food], doubtful that something as highly spiced as, say, salami or pastrami could

DAVID KLINGHOFFER *is literary editor at* National Review.

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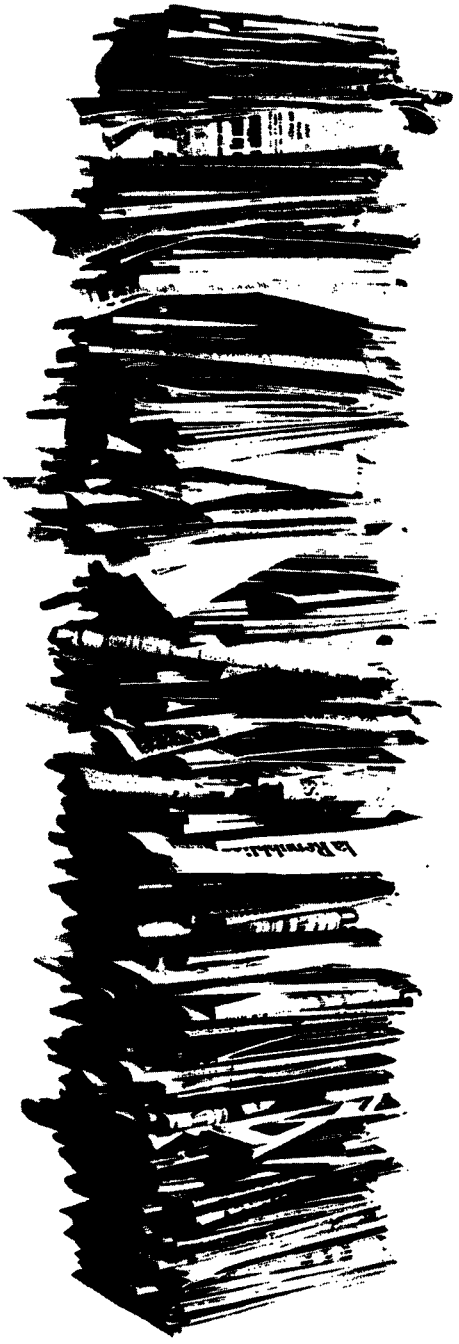

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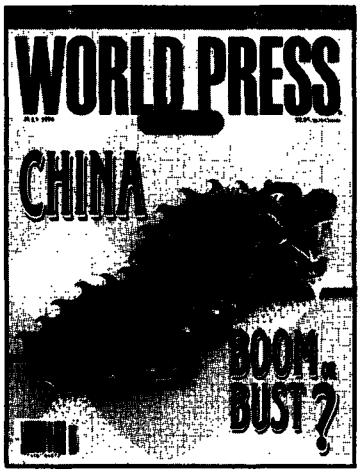


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possibly be good for their children. Tenaciously they adhered to "the first principle of any Bronx housewife—namely, No Delicatessen," breaking that rule only in cases of "extreme emergency" or fatigue.

The white uniforms, then, came about to soothe the anxious by creating an impression of scientific methods and hygienic food preparation. Evidently the ploy worked: by the mid-1930's, New York City boasted 5,000 delicatessens.

ONE thing to be learned from this book is that just as not all ancient ways are ancient, not all seemingly new things are new. If deli food did not descend with Moses from Sinai, nonsugared kosher wine from California bears a longer pedigree than one might imagine: an ad for Macy's reproduced here notes an inventory of the stuff, vintage 1903.

Something else with a specific etiology is the frequently expressed notion that Judaism itself is primarily a household religion, or, as it is sometimes formulated, a "pots-and-pans religion." Joselit has done a terrific job of collecting trivia, from old newspaper and magazine clippings—"The Hebrew Race has been waiting 4,000 years for Crisco"—to the first Maxwell House Haggadah (*circa* 1935). From these yellowing old papers there emerges a major theme: Judaism *became* a household faith, a faith of the kitchen, in America, in this century.

To be sure, many of the rituals of Judaism were intended from the beginning—that is to say, from biblical times—to be performed at home. Still, the notion that "the Jewish God is a household God," as a rabbi put it in 1910, is comparatively recent. What happened, basically, is that in America the father withdrew from the religious leadership of the family, and willy-nilly the mother took over.

Thus, already by the first decade of this century we find references to, as Joselit writes, "the new obligations, duties, and responsibilities [placed] upon the Jewish daughter, mother, and wife." "Increasingly," she continues, "acts of cultural transmission were linked to and conceived of as a maternal matter in which fathers played a secondary and largely ceremonial role."

As it ceased to be the role of the Jewish father to teach his children, especially his sons, the Jewish mother stepped in to fill the gap, to the extent she was able. In non-Orthodox circles, which is to say in most circles of American Jewry, women increasingly dominated synagogue life as well as home life. In Reform temples, the custom of "confirmation" for boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, originally intended to take the place of the archaic and "Oriental" bar mitzvah, became a "girls' business"—so much so that in the years after World War I, Reform rabbis were forced to reintroduce the bar-mitzvah ceremony for boys. In 1950, a survey of Conservative families found that women made up three-quarters of those in attendance at Friday evening services. When the Reform and Conservative movements began ordaining female rabbis during the 1970's and '80's respectively, it was less a radical innovation than an acknowledgment of reality.

WITHOUT explicitly drawing a causal connection, Joselit documents a relationship between this feminization and domestication of Judaism on the one hand, and the unraveling of religious observance on the other.

Thus, despite the longstanding association of women with the oversight of food preparation, and hence of *kashrut*, we learn from this book that the sale of kosher meat in the New York area dropped by almost 30 percent from 1914 to 1924. By 1953, among the lay *leadership* of the Conservative movement, two-thirds chose not to observe *kashrut*. Among Jews generally, Sabbath observance fell to 20 percent by the early 20's and to 2 percent by the 40's.

To get Jews to attend services, some Reform temples opted to switch the day of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. With the same consideration in mind, the Conservative movement in 1950 reinterpreted Jewish religious law to allow the practice of driving on the Sabbath (though only to a synagogue). As Joselit puts it in her value-neutral terms:

> Jewishness itself was redefined. Less a matter of faith or a regimen of distinctive ritual practices than an emotional predisposition or sensibility, it made few demands on its adherents, "flickering to life" at weekly Friday-night family gatherings and yearly Passover seders.

Of course, other realities of American and modern life—rationalism, skepticism, and the growing social acceptance of Jews by non-Jews—contributed crucially to this decline of religious observance. But surely some role must have been played as well by the withdrawal of men, of fathers, from the religious leadership of the family, with everything that entailed by way of an inner loss of discipline. Why that withdrawal took place could be the subject of an essay, or a book, in itself.

Catholics and Orthodox Jews are frequently pressed to explain why traditional religious institutions must remain so male. Why does the Bible refer to God as a "He" and not a "She"? Why cannot a woman be a priest? If a woman can lead a Conservative synagogue, why not an Orthodox one? Without quite intending to do so, this book suggests some answers.

## The Birth of Common Sense?

SIMPLE RULES FOR A COMPLEX WORLD. By RICHARD A. EPSTEIN. *Harvard. 361 pp. $35.00.*

*Reviewed by* DANIEL J. SILVER

THERE is no dearth these days of books and articles decrying the overwhelming complexity of our legal system, and if the success of Philip K. Howard's *The Death of Common Sense* is any indication, there is also a large measure of agreement that we suffer from too many rules and regulations. Yet what we can do about the situation

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is another matter altogether; as Marc M. Arkin noted in her review of *The Death of Common Sense* in the July COMMENTARY, Howard's solution—to write better laws and enforce them more sensibly—is no solution at all if we are being asked to entrust the job of cleaning up the mess to the very people who created it.

By contrast, the noted legal scholar Richard Epstein believes we must reduce the very scope of law; in essence, we must disabuse ourselves of the notion—central to the liberal ideal of the benignly guiding state—that regulation can provide us with all or most of the answers to our social and economic problems.

Epstein is what one might call a modified libertarian: he takes to heart the maxim that government governs best when it governs least—when it allows as much scope as is prudent to the private sphere of consensual, voluntary transactions. Governing well means permitting the existence of a forum—a market—in which people can seek out for themselves the best ways to satisfy their needs and desires. Still, in a world in which the scope of law and regulation is reduced and that of voluntary transactions enlarged, law retains its place. And that is the main purpose of this book: to outline those simple rules of law that should remain in a (hypothetical) regime of limited government.

Ten years ago, Epstein published his first book, *Takings*, an attack on the Supreme Court's application of the "takings" clause of the Fifth Amendment, which is supposed to guarantee that if the government uses its power to take away your property, it must give you "just compensation." There he persuasively argued that the Court had so misconstrued the clause as to disallow compensation in a vast number of cases in which regulations impinged on property rights.

After *Takings*, Epstein went beyond constitutional issues to consider, generally, why government intervention in areas of private rights is so often wrong-headed. In *Forbidden Grounds* (1992), he launched a frontal assault on employment-discrimination laws. These laws, he argued, create perverse incentives which actually keep minorities and women out of work; or they enforce quota-based hiring which prevents an employer from exercising his right to make rational, job-related discriminations in hiring and firing. For Epstein, in order to protect against chimerical harms, these laws impose staggering administrative and litigation costs on the whole society.

IN HIS newest book, Epstein has synthesized his various themes into a grand *summa*, grounded in a philosophy that partakes of at least some of the virtues of classical liberalism: that is, it combines a realistic view of the limits of our nature with a spirit of worldly improvement. He emphasizes repeatedly that all we can really expect from the law—and more fundamentally from any system for distributing scarce resources—is an approximation to ideal social welfare, not the vision of perfect justice by which we have allowed ourselves to be seduced. What he promises from his rules is imperfect justice: the best we can do, and the most we can afford.

Epstein's early work was in the common-law tradition—the body of judge-made rules that accumulated over several centuries of English and American jurisprudence. He feels that we have much to learn from the old common-law judges, even though, or perhaps because, their world was a much simpler one than ours. That world was harsher in certain respects, demanding of individuals and society a degree of self-reliance we would find it hard to imagine—let alone reproduce—today. Nonetheless, Epstein thinks the intuitive wisdom of the common law is more important than ever in our age of complexity.

His main idea is that the scope of government should be limited to preventing the use of force or fraud to coerce one-sided transactional benefits; but he allows—contrary to strict libertarianism—that government is also needed for the occasional administering of common resources where unbridled self-interest would lead to losses of social welfare. The basic conception is not new, but the systematic and often ingenious way in which Epstein shows how these principles can replace most of today's regulations is truly impressive.

He argues, to begin with, that a few simple rules culled from the common law would help set us straight. The most important of these rules are autonomy, first possession, and consensual exchange (or freedom of contract). The principle of autonomy posits that each individual owns himself and can be bought and sold by no one—except that one is free to sell one's services. The concept of first possession is rooted in John Locke's first principle of property—that a man can own that portion of the earth which he appropriates (and mixes with his own labor)—and also in the common-law rule that the first to take possession of property is its owner. These two rules are but the enabling conditions for the third, namely, voluntary, free exchange—the whole basis of the market system.

Next, Epstein considers alternative rules, which he proceeds to show are too costly to administer, lack payoff, or lead to bad incentives. Thus, he contrasts the rule of self-ownership, or autonomy, with two other (diametrically opposed) possibilities: a situation in which someone else has title, so to speak, to another person's body—the situation of slavery; and a situation in which society as a whole has interests in one's talents and human capital—a view Epstein associates in particular with the philosopher John Rawls. Dispensing with arguments grounded in moral considerations, Epstein points in the first case to the tremendous, crippling inefficiency of a legal regime that would depend on identifying proper title to any person's productivity; in the second case, he points to the impossibility of determining collective entitlement to a person's productivity. His conclusion? Autonomy is the most efficient rule.

EPSTEIN'S style of thinking, characteristic of what has come to be called the law-and-economics school, may not be to everyone's taste, but once he gets to the heart of his demonstration—showing the

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bad effects of the rules in place now—the consistency of his logical scheme becomes more apparent. Epstein is in his element in describing the complete hash of efficiency that has been produced by the disregard of simple principles.

Freedom of contract, in particular, has been in a prolonged period of retrenchment, as we can see in areas as diverse as product liability and employment law. In the former, the welter of regulations and the climate of opinion they foster have led to a massive expansion of litigation with no overall decline in accident rates. In the area of employment, the old common-law rule of "contract at will"—you can be fired without cause just as you can quit without liability—has been put out to pasture by both anti-discrimination laws and the creeping doctrine of "just cause" in judicial rulings. The result has been a mushrooming body of law that has proved to be an awful drag on the economy; in the meantime, the workplace has become not a better but a more forbidding and less satisfying place for workers and managers alike.

One cannot do justice here to the wealth of intriguing, well-reasoned arguments in this book. (It must also be noted that although Epstein is a lucid writer, and although this is his most accessible book, he is also an exacting thinker, one who does not cozy up to the reader with lively anecdotes, and who can therefore seem merely dry and abstract.) For all his cleverness, however, and his undoubted moral seriousness, Epstein is ultimately caught up in a paradox that he does not or cannot resolve.

The paradox, in brief, is this: Epstein emphasizes, rightly, the limitations of any legal regime when it comes to creating human happiness; but he also thinks his simple rules, by allowing people to make their own choices, will actually make the world better. One can entirely agree with him that paring back our regime of rules and regulations will prove a boon to common sense. But it is quite a leap of faith to believe that if we follow Epstein's simple rules, society's ills will be cured. What we are really dealing with at bottom are matters of individual and social character—and these are not easily amenable to rational calculation.

Epstein, to his credit, addresses this concern in his final chapter, where he takes up the "Challenges to Simple Rules." An objection he faces down is that his legalisms are devoid of any positive sense of virtue. As Epstein himself eloquently puts the case against his view:

> There has been very little talk in this book of compassion, of courage, of honesty, perseverance, integrity, loyalty, or any of the other personal characteristics that lend distinction and form to individual lives. You would deliver a feeble eulogy if all you said was that the deceased won over the admiration of a large circle of friends by avoiding criminal misconduct and by honoring contracts. Praise requires more than compliance with the minimal requirements of the law. People are often tested by a conflict between loyalty and self-interest, and it takes moral courage and moral wisdom to do the right thing. We honor people for what they do beyond the law, not for what they do in order to avoid the sting of legal sanction.

Well put—but what is the answer to this objection? For Epstein, simply clearing the way for rational, autonomous agents to act freely is the greatest gift the law can confer, while a "second tier of social norms" defines what the community as a whole finds worthy or, on the other hand, meretricious. But there is something missing here. Other than through its sanctions, the law, for Epstein, plays no role in educating people about what society *should* value. It seems unlikely that our Founders would have seen anything comforting in a system of laws disconnected from the civic virtues that should inform both the structure of a benign, democratic state and the spirit of the people so governed.

Epstein thinks with the long view of a utilitarian technocrat, and his sensible and often brilliantly argued vision of a just and productive society is also a vision of a society that would fail to inspire loyalty. With the changed climate of political opinion in this country, Epstein's view of limited government is getting the kind of respectful hearing that few would have dreamed possible ten years ago, when his first book appeared. That is all to the good. But without a moral commitment to a social ideal grander than rational self-interest, political experiments in rolling back the liberal, regulatory state are likely to be short-lived.

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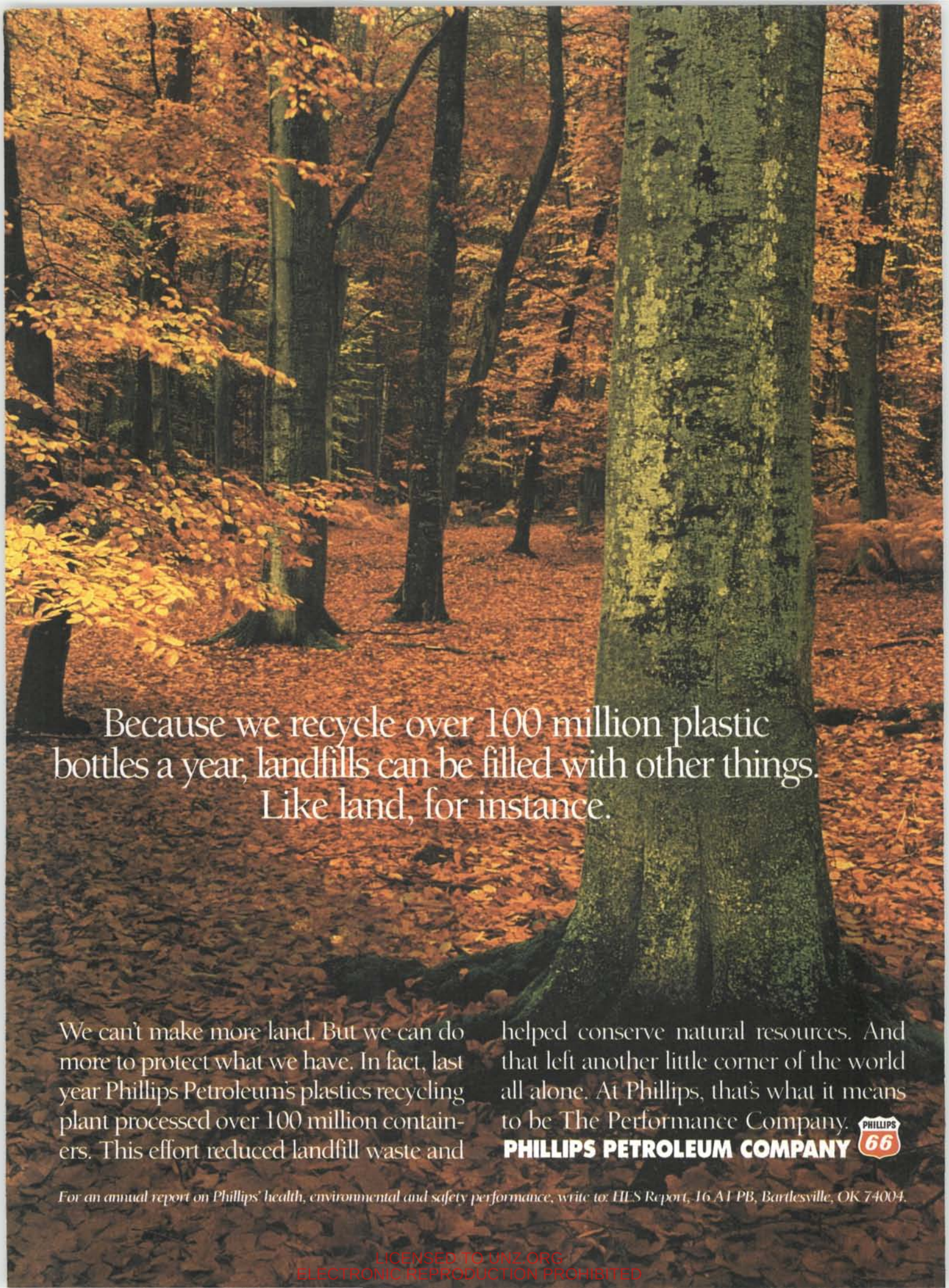
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